

BADGER'S GREEN

CHARACTERS

DOCTOR WETHERBY	}	Gentlemen of importance in the village
MAJOR FORRESTER		
MR TWIGG		
MR BUTLER		A speculative builder
MR ROGERS		Landlord of the Blue Boar
DICKIE WETHERBY		The Doctor's son
MRS WETHERBY		The Doctor's wife
MRS FORRESTER		The Major's wife
MR BUTLER'S SECRETARY		
MARY		Maid at the Doctor's house
A FEW VILLAGERS		

R. C Sherriff

BADGER'S GREEN

*A Play
in Three Acts*

London

VICTOR GOLLANCZ LTD

14 Henrietta Street Covent Garden

1930

Printed in Great Britain by
The Camelot Press Ltd , London and Southampton

THE SCENE

A small Hampshire village on three late summer days

ACT I

SCENE Dr Wetherby's Library Monday
afternoon

ACT II

SCENE I The same Tuesday afternoon

SCENE II The same Wednesday afternoon

ACT III

SCENE I A Marquee on the Green Wednes-
day midday

SCENE II The Marquee Wednesday after-
noon

ACT I

The library of DR WETHERBY's house, a low-built peaceful room, overlooking the village green

Through open windows, beyond a rather wild, entangled little garden and a tall iron gate, you can see the green turf of the cricket pitch baking in the sun. It must be scorching hot out there, but the room is cool and twilight, because big elms shade it, and ivy encroaches greedily round its windows

DR WETHERBY is standing in front of a cricket pad which is propped up on a chair. He is a plump, white-haired man who might be pompous if he were not so quiet and kind. He holds a saucer of liquid pipeclay in one hand, in the other, a toothbrush with which he is applying the mixture to the pad. Newspapers are stretched out on the floor to protect the carpet.

He stands back a pace to view his work in perspective, his head a little to one side, he returns to his work with a concentration that causes heavy, rhythmic breathing

There is a tap on the door. A MAID comes in

MAID Mr Twigg's here, sir

[The DOCTOR continues to work in silence]

Shall I ask him in, sir?

DOCTOR *(pausing, and looking over his shoulder)* - Who?

MAID Mr Twigg, sir.

DOCTOR Good heavens! *(He consults his watch)* Surely it's not three yet?

MAID . It's quite that, sir

DOCTOR *(with a sigh)* - Very well then, Mary. Ask him in

[MARY leaves the room.]

[The DOCTOR returns to his pad. Soon MR TWIGG is shown in. He is rather a shy little man, with something of the air of the City about him. He is untidy, but very clean. His grey suit is old-fashioned and rather loose in cut. His panama hat has mellowed to the colour of ripe corn. There is a large flat book under his arm. He advances in a business-like way, and drops the book smartly on the table.]

MR. TWIGG (*breezily*) Well, here we are !

DOCTOR (*glancing over his shoulder without enthusiasm*) Ah ! (*He returns to his pad*)

[*There is silence for a while. Finally the DOCTOR speaks without turning round.*]

DOCTOR You don't mind me just finishing this pad, do you ?

MR TWIGG No ! Carry on, please

DOCTOR You know what it is if you stop

MR TWIGG I know. You don't get the same effect at all

DOCTOR You get an uneven surface

MR TWIGG It really means doing it all over again. It's exactly the same when I'm varnishing anything. You must do the whole job, as it were, in one breath. For instance, the other day I was just finishing a pipe-rack, I'd just got to the most tricky part of it—the holes for the stems—and what do you think ? my house-keeper comes to say dinner's ready ! Now supposing I'd just put the brush down and left it——

[MR TWIGG is about to continue, but the DOCTOR turns and breaks in very kindly.]

DOCTOR Yes—I say—I wonder if you'd mind not talking just for a minute.

MR. TWIGG I'm sorry——

[MR TWIGG fusses with his book, opens it flat and glances at the pages He takes a small pencil from his waistcoat pocket, goes to the windows, and sharpens it just outside The DOCTOR gives one last careful touch with the toothbrush and steps away

DOCTOR There we are ! *

[MR TWIGG comes and stands beside him

MR TWIGG What a lovely surface you do get !

DOCTOR It just wants care, that's all

[He puts the saucer of pipeclay on a chair, takes the pad to the window and leans it outside in the sun to dry

DOCTOR (looking round outside) No sign of the Major yet

MR TWIGG I saw him as I came by He was busy with his pigeons He was just going up to have a wash He said he'd come right along

[The DOCTOR returns briskly into the room

DOCTOR Have you fixed up about the marquee for Wednesday ?

MR TWIGG Yes It's coming this afternoon Ought to be here any time now They wanted to send us an awful black and yellow striped thing I said "white"

DOCTOR Good heavens, yes ! Whoever heard of a black and yellow marquee for a cricket match ? What do they think it's for—a school treat ?

MR TWIGG I don't know Those sort of people don't seem to have any idea

DOCTOR Anyhow, I hope you spoke to them pretty sharply about the one they sent last year ?

MR TWIGG Yes, I was a bit sarcastic I said it was usual to have a white tent for a cricket match—not a circus tent.

DOCTOR Good ! I'm glad you let them have it

MR TWIGG You've got to—at times

[*There is a pause The DOCTOR is restless*]

DOCTOR I wish the Major would buck up It's nearly ten past three

MR TWIGG He'd only got to wash his hands and put his coat on (*He goes to the window and looks round*) Isn't that him, over there, talking to Hobson ?

DOCTOR (*beside MR TWIGG*) Yes

[*There is a pause They turn into the room The DOCTOR speaks rather gravely*]

DOCTOR Look here, Mr Twigg—before the Major comes—do you know whether this trouble's leaked out ?

MR TWIGG I haven't heard anything

DOCTOR Nor have I—but naturally I *wouldn't* hear

MR TWIGG Quite

DOCTOR I wondered whether anything had come to your ears I've a sort of feeling the Major's been talking

MR TWIGG Well, I only know I came round the corner by Turner's yesterday—and practically ran into the Major He was talking very confidentially to the Vicar.

DOCTOR Yes ?

MR. TWIGG . Well, he stopped when he saw me I felt he was embarrassed

DOCTOR What happened then ?

MR TWIGG . Well, I just smiled and walked by , but there was no mistaking a sense of—of restraint.

DOCTOR What—er—did you feel about the Vicar ?

MR TWIGG Well, he was just listening, and—and scraping the ground with his stick

DOCTOR (*quietly*) Yes

[There is silence for a moment The DOCTOR is deep in thought Suddenly he turns on MR TWIGG and speaks with emphasis]

DOCTOR I'm certain the Major's talking—all over the village It's beastly—so undignified Now look here, Mr Twigg, I'm quite determined about this I'm not going to be insulted I'm not going to have any nonsense from the Major

MR TWIGG Quite

DOCTOR I've given way time and again, just simply because—well, I do *hate* nastiness But the Major thinks it's weakness—he thinks I'm afraid of him I've given way for the sake of the village—for the sake of harmony But you see how it's undermining my prestige ?

MR TWIGG I do !

DOCTOR Well, the time's come to stand firm I depend on you to back me up.

MR TWIGG Certainly !

DOCTOR When it comes to my wife being insulted before the whole village, it's time to act You'll find I can be as firm as a rock

MR TWIGG I think you ought to be I mean, there's no doubt people are beginning to—to *notice* things

DOCTOR In what way do you mean ?

MR TWIGG . Well, it's difficult to—to explain, exactly

DOCTOR What's the general *feeling* about the Major ?

MR TWIGG Well, of course, there's no doubt people realise what a lot he does

DOCTOR Do *you* think he does a lot ?

MR TWIGG Well—no Not as much as *he* does

DOCTOR Don't people realise the kind of man he is ?

MR TWIGG I don't think so He's got that cheery way with the younger men

DOCTOR So the younger men support him ?

MR TWIGG They feel he does a lot for them

DOCTOR I do nothing for them, then ?

MR TWIGG Of course you do But you know what young men are You help in a quiet way The Major's on the surface all the time—if you know what I mean

DOCTOR (*quietly*). I know what you mean

MR TWIGG Take the Club, for instance The Major's always down there playing billiards with them, and standing them beer He's always telling them he presented the new billiard balls, but he never mentions that you presented the table before most of them were even *born* !

DOCTOR Or that I raised the money to found the Club

MR TWIGG Did you ?

[*There is a pause The DOCTOR looks sadly at MR TWIGG, then smiles.*]

DOCTOR Did I ? Didn't you—even *you*, Twigg, know that ?

MR TWIGG (*hastily*) Well, I never enquired
After all, I've only been here fourteen years—
the Club was here when I came

DOCTOR And no one ever told you of my
struggle to found the Club—my two-year
struggle against jealousy and prejudice? My
battle with the Vicar?

MR TWIGG No

DOCTOR Does no one enjoy the Club to-day
—don't the young men enjoy it?

MR TWIGG Why, of course! It's *everything* to
them—it's the life and soul of the village

DOCTOR —and the Major's the life and soul
of the Club!

MR TWIGG You never let people *know* what
you do for them

DOCTOR Do you think I'm the sort of man to
do that?

MR TWIGG Well, after all, the younger men
can hardly expect to know—unless they're told

DOCTOR I should have thought perhaps the
Major could have told them

[*There is a pause before the DOCTOR speaks
again*]

What was the general feeling about the smoking
concert incident?

MR TWIGG Well, I think some people thought
you were *right* in stopping the Major from hav-
ing his encore Others thought you were *wrong*

DOCTOR Some people disputed my chairman-
ship, then?

MR TWIGG Well, they felt the Major always
has had his encore—as long as they can remem-
ber

DOCTOR It's the chairman's duty to call for an encore if it is warranted by sufficient public desire There was *no* public desire

MR TWIGG I know There never is for the Major, but he always *does* sing "Dogs of Devon" as an encore, doesn't he?

DOCTOR He's sung "Dogs of Devon" for the last time under *my* chairmanship Had he any right to get up and sing again after I had announced Mr Hobson's conjuring tricks?

MR TWIGG Certainly not

DOCTOR And yet you say people doubted my decision

[*There is silence MR TWIGG is distinctly uncomfortable The DOCTOR speaks again very quietly*]

DOCTOR Supposing, just for a moment, there were to be an open split Supposing the Major were openly to defy my authority?

MR TWIGG Oh, but that *couldn't* happen!

DOCTOR I said—"supposing" it did What support would the Major get?

MR TWIGG Well, you can't tell I think people would sympathise with *you* quite a lot

DOCTOR (*breathlessly*) *Sympathise!* Pity, I suppose!

MR TWIGG (*hastily*) No That's not the word. I mean—well—everybody who knows what you've done would support you

DOCTOR And if what I've done has been forgotten?

[*Silence falls MR TWIGG, at the table, nervously flicks over the pages of his book The silence is broken by the MAJOR, who comes breezily up the garden*]

path and through the French windows He is a big, hearty man, getting on in life, but full of vigour

MAJOR Sorry I'm late I've had an awful morning (*He throws his cap on a chair and turns with a heavy sigh*) It's no good I must cut things down somehow Interviews before breakfast to-day—

MR TWIGG Before breakfast !

MAJOR Yes *Your* work too You've made the most awful mess over the whist drive D'you know what you've done ?

MR TWIGG No ?

MAJOR Well, Mrs Montague came to see me in a terrible state Did you order the score cards ?

MR TWIGG Yes

MAJOR Well, look what's come ! (*He flourishes a small card with a pencil hanging from it by coloured thread*) Dance programmes !

MR TWIGG But I said " Whist " !

MAJOR Where's the copy of the letter you sent ?

MR TWIGG Well, I—I didn't take a copy.

MAJOR Didn't—take—a copy (*In despair*) Oh, my God !

MR TWIGG Anyhow, why didn't Mrs Montague come to me ? It's my job

MAJOR She said she did, and knocked three times without an answer Apparently everybody was asleep Eight o'clock on a summer morning !

MR TWIGG Well, I'll write about it

MAJOR Write about it ! When we want the cards on Wednesday ! (*He pauses, and goes on patiently*) It's all right I've sent a telegram

DOCTOR It's nearly twenty past three We must give the General Committee a complete report this evening There's a lot for us to do yet

MAJOR (*sitting down briskly at the table*) Right away, then ¹

MR TWIGG May I propose that Dr Wetherby takes the chair ?

MAJOR (*carelessly*) I second that

[*They seat themselves at the table DR WETHERBY in an armchair on one side, the MAJOR opposite him, MR TWIGG in the centre*]

DOCTOR I suppose we ought to read the Minutes of the last meeting ?

MAJOR Seems rather red tape, doesn't it—just us three

DOCTOR It's hardly a question of what it seems to us The General Committee look to us for an example I think we ought to

MAJOR (*laughing indulgently*) • Oh, yes—it doesn't matter

DOCTOR I call upon Mr Twigg to read the Minutes of the last meeting

[MR TWIGG *clears his throat and reads*]

MR TWIGG “ Minutes of Entertainment Sub-Committee of Badger's Green Cricket Club, held at Ivy House, by courtesy of Dr Wetherby, on Thursday, 3rd August, 1929 ”

DOCTOR • Are you sure it was the 3rd ? The 3rd was the Friday before Bank Holiday

MAJOR Well, we met before Bank Holiday

DOCTOR • I know, but Thursday was the 2nd Bank Holiday was on the 5th , Thursday must have been the 2nd

MAJOR It would have been the 1st, if Monday was the 5th—Twigg's wrong

DOCTOR Excuse me—I think you're both wrong Obviously Thursday must have been the 2nd—unless we met on the Friday and not the Thursday What a pity Twigg's so unreliable

MAJOR Twigg's got the *day* all right—we certainly met on the Thursday, because I remember having two other important meetings that evening—it's simply the *date* he's got wrong Thursday was the 1st

DOCTOR Thursday was the 2nd.

MAJOR I tell you it was the 1st

DOCTOR (*rising*) Well, we can soon settle it (*He crosses to his desk, takes up his calendar, and brings it with quiet triumph to the MAJOR*) Here you are—Thursday the 2nd It's a pity you can't trust me a little more, Major

MAJOR Let me see

[*The DOCTOR quietly hands him the calendar.*]

DOCTOR There you are

[*The MAJOR studies the calendar with a perplexed face, which slowly lights up in triumph*]

MAJOR This is a last year's calendar.

DOCTOR There's no need to be impertinent, Major Considering I've used it the whole year——

MAJOR Well, use your eyes (*He points.*) 1928

[*The DOCTOR looks at the calendar, and silently returns it to his desk MR TWIGG tactfully begins to read again*]

MR TWIGG "Minutes of the Entertainment Sub-Committee of Badger's Green Cricket Club,

held at Ivy House, by courtesy of Dr Wetherby, on Thursday, 3rd August, 1929 "

[*The DOCTOR has returned to his seat MR TWIGG continues*

" Present Dr Wetherby in the chair , Major Forrester , Mr Twigg The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed The question of seating accommodation was discussed It was decided to again approach Mr Dickenson for the kind loan of his garden seats Proposed by Dr Wetherby and seconded by Major Forrester that the secretary write to Mr Dickenson, thanking him for lending his seats last year, and requesting the loan again The secretary read a letter from Mrs Graham, complaining that one of her chairs lent last year was returned with a broken leg—

[*MR TWIGG continues to read the Minutes concerning the damaged chair*

[*The MAJOR, who has hardly been able to sit still for triumph, begins to chuckle quietly to himself His chuckle gradually becomes louder He looks at the DOCTOR from beneath his eyebrows The DOCTOR sits with a graven face for a while, pretending not to notice At last he speaks with quiet dignity*

DOCTOR There's an old saying, Major " Little things please little minds "

MAJOR (*chuckling louder*) Well, after all, it was funny, wasn't it ? Fancy you going about not knowing what year it is !

DOCTOR (*with quiet sarcasm*) " Little things please little minds "

MAJOR I did think you could see a joke against yourself !

DOCTOR I'm always glad to see small minds amused , it's not easy to provide a simple enough joke

[There is silence The MAJOR still smiles to himself MR TWIGG, who stopped reading the Minutes when the DOCTOR spoke, and is now sitting patiently waiting, suddenly becomes aware of the silence, and hurriedly continues to read

MR TWIGG "The question of the marquee was then raised Dr Wetherby complained that the——"

DOCTOR (*breaking in*) I don't like the word "complained" "Stated" is better

[MR TWIGG makes the alteration with his little pencil, and proceeds

MR TWIGG "Doctor Wetherby stated that the marquee supplied by Robinsons last year contained a thin red stripe , he pointed out that marquees for cricket matches should be a plain white The secretary was instructed to write to Robinsons, clearly stating that a plain white marquee *must* be provided this year Following the General Committee's decision to dispense with a hired caterer, and form a voluntary Refreshment Committee of local ladies to arrange the tea, the question of a lady to supervise was raised. No name was put forward, and the matter was left to the next meeting The meeting then adjourned "

DOCTOR (*after a pause*) Is it your wish that I sign these Minutes ?

[The MAJOR and MR TWIGG raise their hands The DOCTOR produces a fountain-pen and signs the book He then turns over the page and consults the Minutes.

DOCTOR . Points arising. The garden seats?

MR TWIGG Yes I've seen Mr Dickenson , everything's all right His five seats will take twenty-five Mrs Graham will lend her chairs So, with the benches, we can seat nearly a hundred

DOCTOR That's all right, then Now, the question of the marquee

MR TWIGG Well, as I explained to you, I've arranged all that

MAJOR When did you explain it ? I don't remember

DOCTOR He was telling me just before you came.

MAJOR Well, that's hardly official, is it ?

MR TWIGG (*hurriedly*) The position is this Last year there was a great deal of comment about that tent which Robinsons supplied—it had a thin red stripe in it You remember I was instructed this year to make it clear that the tent must be a *white* one—just a plain white I cycled over to Market Duxford and saw Robinsons—in fact I had a personal interview with Mr Robinson He wanted to send us a dreadful black and yellow tent, but I was quite firm, and Robinsons promised that we should have a plain white one

MAJOR I can't understand why on earth he didn't realise that—surely, a cricket match—

DOCTOR (*breaking in*) Anyhow, he clearly understands we're not going to accept a black and yellow one ?

MR TWIGG Yes, he definitely promised to send a white tent

DOCTOR Very well That's settled Now then

[*He peers at the Minute-book*]

MR TWIGG (*diffidently*) Well, the next point is—the—er—question of appointing a lady to supervise the tea

DOCTOR (*sitting back in his chair*) Yes

[*There is silence*]

MR TWIGG No name was put forward at the last meeting

[*There is another silence Presently the MAJOR begins to fidget He starts to speak—stops—clears his throat, and begins again*]

MAJOR Well, I must say I was rather surprised that no name was suggested at the last meeting We require a lady with ability to organise It's—it's very difficult to speak on this matter, and I don't want you to think I am disparaging anyone else, but there's one lady who not only *has* that ability, but also the experience (*He pauses*) My wife has organised the choir teas for the past ten years During my service days she frequently helped to organise teas on a very large scale It's naturally embarrassing for a man to propose the name of his own wife, but it seems such an obvious selection—yet here we sat for half an hour at the last meeting and no one—

DOCTOR (*gently breaking in*) Just a moment, Major I quite appreciate the loyalty you owe your wife, but you must remember there are certain traditions, and shall I say, courtesies—quite apart from other reasons—that indicate the lady to take charge—

[*He pauses*]

MAJOR Well, what are you getting at?

DOCTOR I don't understand you I'm "getting at" nothing

MAJOR Well, who are you suggesting against my wife?

DOCTOR I'm not suggesting anyone "against" your wife, as you put it. You know quite well the lady I mean. My wife is not only the wife of the President of the Club—which in itself clearly indicates her selection—but her own ability places her beyond question as the lady to take charge.

MAJOR I'm not suggesting a word against your wife—it's simply a question of organising ability.

DOCTOR On what grounds do you question my wife's organising ability? You said last week how much you enjoyed our garden party.

MAJOR Certainly. A delightful party. But tea for ten is a very different matter to tea for fifty.

DOCTOR It's only a relative matter.

MAJOR It's a matter of organisation.

DOCTOR We are not excluding your wife from assisting in the organisation.

MAJOR That's not the point. The point is that the most experienced organiser must have a free hand.

MR TWIGG Can't they *both* do it—jointly?

DOCTOR (*taking no notice of MR TWIGG*) You ignore the value of prestige—the ability to inspire others to work cheerfully in minor capacities.

MAJOR So my wife has no prestige? The wife of the captain of the team has no prestige?

DOCTOR Don't be silly, Major.

MAJOR I'm *not* being silly.

DOCTOR (*tapping the table with his pencil*) Chair, please.

[*There is a pause.*]

You ignore the traditions and etiquettes which every village like ours naturally observes

MAJOR You put worn-out traditions before efficiency ?

DOCTOR You still assume, for some extraordinary reason, that your wife is more efficient than mine

MAJOR You don't seem to understand *Experience* is the word I'm stressing—

DOCTOR —of which you have no proof

MAJOR I've got the plainest proof The choir teas

[There is a pause The DOCTOR clears his throat and speaks]

DOCTOR I'm sorry, Major Forrester There are times when, for the good of the village, a man must speak quite frankly I've attended more than one of the choir teas I've never said a word out of fairness for a keen, voluntary effort—but I have detected a certain lack of—of—

MAJOR (*tensely*) Well, go on—

DOCTOR —of, shall I say, inability to understand the needs of a large gathering, an inability to inspire others to work keenly It's no disparagement to your wife, Major, a woman either has that ability, or she hasn't

[For a moment there is silence Then the MAJOR rises, takes up his hat, and goes without a word to the French windows]

MR TWIGG (*in a thin voice*) : Major—where are you going ?

MAJOR (*quietly*) I am going to place my resignation as captain of the cricket team in the hands of the General Committee—

MR TWIGG (*in dismay*) But—but you can't !

MAJOR In future the Club will do without the services of my gardener to mow the pitch—nor will it have my own poor services

MR TWIGG But it's impossible—the scandal !

MAJOR (*with sudden fury*) You expect me to sit there and listen to insults flung in my wife's face—behind her back !

MR TWIGG But, Major, it's—it's terrible , the whole Club—the whole village will suffer—do come back !

DOCTOR (*quietly*) Yes, Major , sit down for a moment I have something to say

MAJOR I'll stand

[*There is a pause before the DOCTOR speaks*]

DOCTOR I've been expecting this moment for a long time now I knew it must come sooner or later This is no silly, petty quarrel over the ability of two good women Far deeper issues lie beneath it For thirty years I've given my all to this village My medical services, my help on the cricket field, in the social life I've never spared myself For ten years I was captain of the cricket team , for twenty I have been its President I hope I may have done some good, and gained some little respect Ten years ago, Major Forrester, *you* came to live here I was the first to call upon you It was *I* who brought you in touch with the best in the village When your ambitions turned towards the captaincy of the Cricket Club, it was *I* who brought all my influence towards your election But of late years I have been conscious of something—a kind of barrier growing up between us Little incidents, the incident over the wicket-keeping gloves last year, the incident last May at the smoking

concert, little things in themselves, but danger signals all the same, a studied insolence towards me as President I am sorry to use those words, Major—studied insolence, a steady endeavour to undermine my prestige——

MAJOR Now, look here——

DOCTOR One moment I've been forbearing—
forbearing to the point of weakness I sacrificed
my pride again and again for the sake of peace
Yet every time I gave way you thought it was
weakness, a fear of *you* I may be growing an
old man, but I still have my spirit You will not
resign, Major—you will have the courage to
face a General Meeting We can no longer
tolerate this position—one of us two must go
Mr Twigg will call a General Meeting You
and I will stand before the village, state our case
and be judged If I am defeated, then you will
be President and I will retire I think I am man
enough to bear defeat I will go away from
Badger's Green, even though it means the end
of the things that matter to me most of all

*[There is a pause The MAJOR has been standing
by the window He begins to speak quietly, weighing
every word with care, but as he goes on he speaks
with increasing warmth]*

MAJOR I knew this would have to come, too
I've seen it coming nearer day by day You
spoke of giving your all to the village Haven't
I given my all too? I came here twelve years
ago—you said ten just now, but that's a small
point—I gave my heart and soul I founded the
Bowling Club I saved the Archery Club from
extinction, I organised the annual sports on a
scale never before dreamed of—and then, at
your own request, I turned my energy to the
Cricket Club I became captain I gave my
last ounce of thought and energy to the Club——

every spare penny Yet while the committee showed its gratitude, there was always a nagging opposition (*he points straight at the Doctor*) from *you*, Dr Wetherby ! I would put forward new ideas , the committee were always keen, but they never dared to act without referring to the President And what did the President do ? He pulled my ideas to pieces—said “ Is it wise ? ” He treated me like a hot-headed little boy who must be restrained ! Of course the committee listened ! Because you have been here thirty years they follow you like sheep If by sheer force I was able to make progress and succeed, they passed a vote of thanks, to *you* ! If because of your nagging opposition, I failed—I was blamed by *you* !

DOCTOR That'll do, Major !

MAJOR There you are ! “ That'll do ” It's always “ That'll do ! ” when the plain truth begins to come

DOCTOR I've never opposed you I've merely tried, as an older man, to show you wisdom when I felt you were wrong

MAJOR Show me wisdom ! Me ! With twenty years' Army service ! A Major and you show me wisdom !

DOCTOR I've said all I have to say, Major As President, I decline to accept your resignation from the captaincy, a General Meeting—the whole village—will be asked to judge

MAJOR Yes , because you *know* they'll back you up ! Because you've vegetated here for thirty years, you *know* they daren't turn you out ! Sentiment for an old man !

DOCTOR How dare you say that ! You are *afraid* to face the village ! Because you bluster

and try and bully (*he suddenly becomes quiet*)—I'm sorry—I was forgetting myself Perhaps I *am* too old It's the day of the younger men I won't defend myself I shall simply explain what has happened—and resign.

MR TWIGG Oh—but you can't !

MAJOR There you are There's Twigg ! *He* won't accept your resignation—you know the village won't ! Don't you know that *every* village puts sentiment before progress, and goes wallowing on with old men in charge who are too selfish to resign ! That every keen man who tries to drive ahead is suffocated by jealousy ?

DOCTOR I will not be insulted in my own house ! I order you to leave

MAJOR (*furiously*) I will ! Never to return ! I shall leave the village to muddle on by itself But one last word before I go——

[*The MAJOR pauses dramatically—but in the pause DICKIE WETHERBY, the DOCTOR's son, comes cheerfully through the French windows He is not much over twenty He goes over to his father*

DICKIE I say ! Have you seen what's happened ? An awful black and yellow striped tent's just arrived ! An appalling thing ! We can't possibly use it for a big game like Wednesday's !

MR TWIGG But I distinctly said a *white* tent Mr Robinson promised me personally——

DICKIE Well, we must do something about it quickly We've only got a couple of days to get it changed (*He suddenly remembers a letter he is carrying*) Oh, look here, Mr Twigg, here's an express letter just arrived for you I found the postman running round in circles with it I told him I thought I should find you here

MR TWIGG An *express* letter !

[He examines it all over, and nervously begins to open it]

DICKIE *(turning again to his father)* You know, really, we simply can't use it ! The committee's looking at it now We must have it taken away before they begin to like it

[He turns and sees the MAJOR standing grimly in the corner]

DICKIE Hullo, Major ! How's your cold ?

MAJOR *(stiffly)* My cold's better, thank you

DICKIE Splendid ! Can't have you laid up for the big match *(He slowly becomes conscious of tension in the air)* I say—I'm sorry—are you having a meeting ?

MAJOR *(coldly)* The meeting's over

DICKIE Good ! I thought I'd butted in What about having the flag-staff painted ? We must look spick and span to meet Ragholt It'll be a grand game if the weather holds

[MR TWIGG has been poring over his letter He looks up, blinking rapidly]

MR TWIGG This is a most extraordinary thing !

DICKIE What's the trouble ?

MR TWIGG Well—what's the “Badger's Green Development Syndicate” ?

DICKIE The—what ?

MR TWIGG “The Badger's Green Development Syndicate”

DICKIE What on earth are you talking about ?

MR TWIGG Well, here's a letter from an old friend of mine, Harry Parker We were at school together

DICKIE What's he say ?

MR TWIGG He says "Dear Twigg" (*he pauses and looks up apologetically*)—that's only just a bit of his fun I used to be called "Twigg" in the old days He says —"Dear Twigg,—I expect you know all about the Badger's Green Development Syndicate In case you don't, I am writing at once, because it seems such a frightful shame I met a man named Butler last night He's got a wonderful scheme to develop your village into a bungalow town He's going to build bungalows by the hundred on the downs all round Badger's Green——"

DICKIE What !

DOCTOR Here, give me that !

[*He takes the letter from MR TWIGG and reads it with trembling hands After a moment he looks up and speaks in a low hoarse voice*

Good heavens—the blackguards !

DICKIE (*looking over the DOCTOR's shoulder*)
What on earth is it ?

DOCTOR Look what he says ? —bungalows by the hundred on the downs all round Badger's Green He said he would have to cut down most of the pinewood——"

MR TWIGG Oh, but surely not the *pinewood* !

DOCTOR (*continuing to read*) : "He's made a preliminary survey——"

DICKIE (*excitedly*) Those were the fellows we saw nosing round here last month ! Don't you remember those nasty-looking fat men in bowler hats ?

DOCTOR (*reading*) "He's coming down on Tuesday to start things going It seems a great pity to spoil such a lovely place. Yours, Harry"
Who's Harry ?

MR TWIGG · Harry Parker An awfully nice man (*He sighs and shakes his head*) He must be getting on now

DICKIE . He's coming Tuesday ! To-morrow !

DOCTOR Look at this leaflet ! “ The Badger's Green Development Syndicate is purchasing a large stretch of country round this beautiful little show place——” (*He looks up and repeats hoarsely “ show place ”*)—“ perfectly constructed bungalows will be erected on the estate, with every modern convenience The enclosed plan shows the projected lay-out——” The unutterable blackguards ! Fancy having this profane leaflet published without consulting us !

DICKIE Where's the plan ?

DOCTOR Here it is (*He unfolds a bright pink plan, and studies it with DICKIE looking over his shoulder*)

DICKIE (*pointing*) Look ! Bungalows ! Rows and rows of bungalows—all round here !

[*The MAJOR, has slowly emerged from his dark corner and is now looking over the DOCTOR's shoulder*]

MAJOR What are all those little blue squares along the end of my garden ?

DOCTOR Those are bungalows Thousands of bungalows.

MAJOR Bungalows at the end of my garden !

DOCTOR Look here ! A golf course ! On Tupney Downs ! Look ! Cinema and Dance Hall !

MAJOR What's this just opposite my house ?
Number six

[*The DOCTOR feverishly searches the key plan at the bottom.*]

DOCTOR Number six—where's Number six !
Here we are ! Number six—Sanitary Laundry !

MAJOR (*wild-eyed*) A Sanitary Laundry in
front of my house ! Not while there's breath in
my body !

DOCTOR Look here ! In Johnson's meadow—
Site for Electric Generating Station

DICKIE (*pointing to the plan*) Look ! Car Park !

DOCTOR (*in a trembling voice*) Japanese Tea
Garden !

DICKIE Stand for charabancs

DOCTOR Look at this ! “ Old Village Green
To be left in its present condition ”

MAJOR Hoh ! That's obliging of him !

MR TWIGG What's he going to build opposite
my house ?

DICKIE A sewage farm, most likely

MR TWIGG Well, if he does—I'll—I'll blow
it up !

MAJOR (*wheeling on Mr TWIGG*) You've said
the word ! We'll blow it up ! We'll blow the
whole damn thing up !

DOCTOR Wait just a moment We must think.

MAJOR Think ! Think—when he's coming
down to-morrow to ruin the village ! There's
no time to *think* ! It's time to act !

DOCTOR But we must act with thought (*He
pauses*) I don't think any of us quite realise
yet—what this means

MAJOR We'll kick the devil out !

DOCTOR I can hardly believe that Sir John
would sell those downs

MAJOR · What does he care ? He never lives here

MR TWIGG Well, he might have given *us* a thought

[There is a moment's pause Then the DOCTOR speaks, his voice is tense and quiet

DOCTOR Are you prepared to fight ?

MAJOR Fight ! Thank God I'm not too old to fight yet !

DOCTOR —to fight what may be a hard and difficult battle ?

MAJOR To the end !

DOCTOR Would the village back us if we fought ?

MAJOR To a man !

DOCTOR We shall not only be fighting for our homes , we shall be fighting for our honour against a contemptuous insult To think any man dare lay out this scheme behind our backs —to carve up our village and make this plan !

MAJOR We'll chuck him out neck and crop !

DOCTOR Wait a minute It might be fatal to do anything hasty and ill-considered We must meet him for what he is—a crafty business man We must fight him with his own weapons Physical violence might be a great mistake

MAJOR It's the only thing he'd understand

DOCTOR We must only use violence in extremity We'll rouse the village to fight, but keep a firm hand on it until it's necessary to let go When he comes, we shall ask him to meet us You and I, Major, and Mr Twigg will meet him shoulder to shoulder We three men represent

Badger's Green as no other men do—*our* decision is the *village* decision We shall tell this man we refuse to allow him to build here We shall order him to cancel his plans and leave

MAJOR To think of the pinewoods being hacked down !

DOCTOR We mustn't allow details to dominate our plans

MAJOR Details ! You call the Pinewood a detail ?

DOCTOR We must keep the broad principles in mind and fight clearly—we must begin at once, every obstacle must be put in his way—

MAJOR What about a few good sharp nails in the road ?

DOCTOR I've said we must reserve physical force until moral force has failed Dickie ! Go down to the Blue Boar, and tell Mr Rogers that if a stranger comes he must refuse him food and drink Tell him I'll make up the loss

DICKIE (*going to the windows*) Right !

MAJOR And if you see that new policeman explain the whole thing to him, and tell him to do something about it

DICKIE (*going out*) Right !

[*There is a pause The DOCTOR and the MAJOR are facing one another*]

DOCTOR If this man wins, it means the end of all our work—of all we've tried to do for Badger's Green

MAJOR He won't win !

DOCTOR He can't—if we stick together—

MAJOR —and fight together—

DOCTOR We've not a moment to lose

MAJOR Well—let's *act* ! What shall we do first ?

DOCTOR Well—let me see——

MAJOR I know ! I'll go down to the Blue Boar and have a mass meeting You go and get the Vicar going

DOCTOR No , we'll keep the Vicar in reserve I'll come with you to the Blue Boar We'll *both* speak

MAJOR Well—don't let's waste time

[They go out together, talking]

DOCTOR It's an insult to the whole village !

MAJOR I've never heard anything like it ! We'll soon have the village up in arms !

[Their indignant voices die away MR TWIGG is alone He is sitting at the table deep in thought, his arms resting upon his open Minute-book]

MARY comes in with a white cloth and a plate of bread and butter She pauses, surprised to see MR TWIGG there alone

MARY Will you be staying to tea, sir ?

MR TWIGG *(starts, and looks embarrassed)* Oh—er—no, Mary I don't think I shall be staying——

[There is a pause]

MARY Would you mind me laying the cloth, sir ?

MR TWIGG Er—yes—do !

[He gathers up his Minute-book, and goes slowly towards the window with the book under his arm.]

MARY lays the cloth and turns Her eye falls upon MR TWIGG's letter, which lies on the carpet where it has been dropped by the DOCTOR She picks it up

MARY · Is this your letter, sir ?

MR TWIGG Oh—yes—thanks (*he looks up at MARY and smiles rather proudly*), an *express* letter
(*He turns and goes slowly towards the windows*)

MARY (*picking up his panama hat from chair*)
Your hat, sir

MR TWIGG (*smiling*) Oh, thanks (*He goes down the garden path*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE I

The library of DR WETHERBY'S house towards twelve o'clock next morning

The DOCTOR and the MAJOR, looking very important in morning coats, are supervising DICKIE and MR TWIGG, who are struggling to get a table through the door DICKIE is pulling, MR TWIGG, at present out of sight in the passage, is pushing The MAJOR is holding an inkpot and some blotting paper to put on the table when it is through the door

DOCTOR Don't pull it ! Ease it gently It's no good trying to force it

MR TWIGG (*outside in the passage*) Try tilting it a bit

DICKIE . That's no good You can't get the legs through like that

MAJOR Try lifting it a bit

MR TWIGG I can't lift it

MAJOR You've got the leg caught in the carpet If only you'd lift it

MR TWIGG (*petulantly*) I tell you, I *can't* lift it

MAJOR Of course you can

MR TWIGG Well, come and try yourself Give it a twist, Dickie——

[DICKIE gives it a twist, but it becomes more firmly wedged]

DICKIE It's absolutely stuck

MAJOR . What on earth are we going to do if he comes now ?

DOCTOR It's all right It's no use getting excited It's only ten minutes to We must get it right back and start again

MAJOR Well, we'd better buck up. If only he'd lift the damn thing.

DOCTOR Get it back into the passage, Mr Twigg

MR TWIGG It won't come

DOCTOR Push it, Dickie

[DICKIE *pushes*

DICKIE It's no good

MAJOR Lift your end, Twigg

MR TWIGG I'm certain you can do it if you give it a twist

DICKIE I *have* given it a twist.

MR TWIGG Not a proper twist

MAJOR Well, come and do it yourself—if you *know*—

MR TWIGG I've had tables get stuck like this before

MAJOR Well, that doesn't help if you can't *do* anything

MR TWIGG I can't from here

MAJOR Well, come and do it this side.

MR TWIGG I'll soon show you what I mean

[MR TWIGG *comes crawling over the table—but only his head has appeared before the DOCTOR calls out*

DOCTOR Don't do *that* ! You'll press it down firmer—get under !

MR TWIGG I can't get under

DOCTOR Well, go round, then

[MR TWIGG's head *disappears* The MAJOR and the DOCTOR are obviously restless and ill at ease.

MAJOR I don't know why we couldn't have used this one (*He fingers the small round table they used the previous day for the committee meeting*)

DOCTOR How *can* we meet him at a silly little table like that ? He'd laugh at us

MAJOR Well, how's he going to get in if we can't move that one ?

DOCTOR We shan't see him till we are ready I intend to keep him waiting in any case I've told Mary to show him into the breakfast-room

MAJOR We ought to have measured it before we tried to get it through

DOCTOR We've had it in here before—lots of times

[MR TWIGG *has come round by the front door, and hurries in through the French windows He also is wearing a morning coat, with spats*

MR TWIGG I'm certain it only wants a quick twist, and a pull——

MAJOR Well, do it !

[MR TWIGG *goes to the table, and gives it a little twist In some way he has released it, for he is able to pull it into the room*

MR TWIGG (*his face wreathed in smiles*) There you are

MAJOR Well, for goodness' sake don't stand there smirking

MR TWIGG I don't know why you couldn't have done that

MAJOR Well—buck up—what's the time ?

DOCTOR (*consulting his watch*) Six minutes to Now then, bring it across here

[DICKIE and MR TWIGG *carry the table over to the fireplace, followed by DOCTOR*

MAJOR (*rubbing the door-frame with his finger*) : He's taken all your paint off What a clumsy fellow he is

DOCTOR (*directing*) • That's right—a little away from the wall, so that we can get in and out. Now, Major ! The ink and blotting paper

[*The MAJOR steps forward smartly and puts the ink and blotting paper on the table He then stands back and looks at the table critically*]

MAJOR I should have the table broadside to the door, so that when he comes in you and I and Twigg will be sitting facing him—shoulder to shoulder

MR TWIGG That's a good idea Facing him—shoulder to shoulder

[*They move the table accordingly and stand back to look at it*]

DOCTOR No, I don't think so It looks too formal Too much like a tribunal

MR TWIGG Yes, it *does* look rather like a tribunal

MAJOR Well, it is a tribunal, isn't it ?

DOCTOR Hardly a tribunal We don't want him to think we're seriously concerned Just sit along behind it—I'll have a look

[*The MAJOR, MR TWIGG and DICKIE get chairs, and sit along behind the table The DOCTOR looks critically for a moment, then goes out of the door and returns to get the effect*]

DOCTOR No, it's too formal—too grim It would flatter him, and make him think we were afraid of him Bring it round a bit—that's better (*They move the table a little*) It looks more casual if we sit like that It'll make him feel he's just a passing nuisance

MR TWIGG A pen. There's no pen ! What about a pen ?

DOCTOR (*quietly*) All right Don't get excited
Dickie, a pen

[DICKIE brings a pen from the desk

After all, it is only a small affair We've all faced
bigger troubles than this

MAJOR Good God, yes What's the time ?

DOCTOR I make it—just four minutes to

MAJOR We'd better buck up

DOCTOR I think we're practically ready (*He
pauses and looks thoughtfully at the table*) Oh, I
know—a bottle of water and a glass (*He goes
to the door and calls*) Mary !

DICKIE What about chairs ? I suppose you'll
let him sit down ?

DOCTOR Oh, yes Certainly he can sit down if
he wants to We shall want—let's see—four
chairs for ourselves, five altogether—or do you
think his secretary will come too ?

DICKIE Certain to, I should think Probably a
dictaphone and a couple of typewriters as well

[MARY comes in

MARY Did you call, sir ?

DOCTOR Yes, Mary I want you to bring the
water-bottle down off my washhand-stand
See that it's *full*, with a clean glass over the top
—as quickly as possible

MARY Yes, sir

[*She goes out*

DOCTOR Now, let's see—what were we doing ?
(*He thinks*) Oh, chairs The secretary can sit on
this one (*He pulls forward the chair from his desk*)
Now we only want one for Mr Butler 'Bring
one out of the hall, Dickie

DICKIE Which one ?

DOCTOR Oh, the—er—hard one

DICKIE Righto

[DICKIE goes out

MAJOR Don't you think a soft one ? If we make him feel at ease, we might catch him off his guard

DOCTOR No, it's morally wrong to do that We must fight fair ! Now then ! (*He looks at the table and thinks*)

MAJOR What about a few sheets of paper, for notes, etc ?

DOCTOR Yes—on my desk, Mr Twigg

MR TWIGG One sheet before each ?

DOCTOR Yes, and a few extra sheets in the middle of the table

[MR TWIGG gets the paper and places a sheet before each chair

Don't you think we ought to have a few books of reference ?

MAJOR No Clear table—a clear hand Napoleon never had anything but an inkpot on his table

MR TWIGG He must have had a pen

MAJOR Of course he had a pen ! What do you think ?

[The DOCTOR breaks in as DICKIE arrives with a chair

DOCTOR Ah ! Come along, Dickie (*Taking the chair*) Now then—three behind the table

[The DOCTOR gives directions

My armchair in the centre—that's right Mr. Butler can sit here—so (*he places the chair in the centre of the room*)—and his secretary here (*he moves a chair slightly behind MR BUTLER'S chair*)

DICKIE Where do I sit ?

DOCTOR Oh, just here (*He places the other chair slightly behind those at the table*) You can be my secretary, Dickie You jot down agenda, memoranda, etc, and don't you talk too much

MR TWIGG (*fingering the chair in the centre*) Don't you think Mr Butler might sit just a little—

DOCTOR (*sharply*) Leave it alone

MR TWIGG (*letting go quickly*) I'm sorry

DOCTOR What's the good of arranging things if you interfere I know perfectly well where Mr Butler ought to sit

MR TWIGG Well, I only thought—

DOCTOR Well, for goodness' sake don't be a nuisance We've quite enough to do as it is (*He looks anxiously at his watch*)

DICKIE I suppose I can join in and say something now and then ?

DOCTOR I'd rather you didn't, Dickie This matter requires very careful handling—discretion's not your strong point, you know We're going to meet an artful business man

MAJOR What do you make the time ?

DOCTOR Two minutes to

MAJOR Well, that girl had better buck up It surely doesn't take half an hour to fetch a water-bottle ?

DOCTOR Yes, where is that lazy girl

[*He goes to the door and meets MARY coming in.*

Come along, come along Now just in the middle of the table, Mary—slightly to the right—so that it's beside my elbow when I lean over the table That'll show that I'm the—er—principal person (*He turns to MARY*) Now you understand exactly what to do when Mr Butler arrives? Ask for his card, and enquire whether he has an appointment Then usher him into the morning-room Give him *The Times* to read, then come and tell me he is here I shall instruct you to go to him and say I am engaged for the moment, but won't keep him long You will then wait until I ring the bell You will then usher him in

MARY Yes, sir

DOCTOR Very well Thank you, Mary

MARY I give him *The Times* to read, sir?

DOCTOR Yes, here you are (*He takes "The Times" from his desk, and gives it to MARY*)

MAJOR Wouldn't it be better if she gave him *The Times* when she goes back to say you're engaged? That would look as if he'd got longer to wait

DOCTOR All right, Mary, thank you

MARY When shall I give it 'im, sir?

DOCTOR As I explained to you

[*MARY goes out, a little mystified*]

The DOCTOR turns coldly to the MAJOR

DOCTOR I do wish you wouldn't contradict me in front of my servants, Major

MAJOR Well, surely, a suggestion

DOCTOR I prefer to consider suggestions in private

MR TWIGG Don't you want the pink plan ?
You arranged to tear it up in front of him

DOCTOR Er—yes—the plan—where is it ?

[They search feverishly for the plan]

MAJOR We had it here last night

DICKIE It ought to be easy enough to find—it's bright enough

DOCTOR In the drawing-room, Dickie I was looking at it after breakfast Quick ! Before he comes !

[DICKIE rushes off to get the plan]

MAJOR It must have gone twelve

DOCTOR Only just We're all ready now, I think

MR TWIGG Can we smoke at the meeting ?

DOCTOR Certainly not

MAJOR Good heavens, no !

[DICKIE arrives with the plan]

DOCTOR Ah, Dickie, on the table No, I'll bring it out of my pocket at the right moment

[As he puts it in his pocket, the MAJOR, who has wandered to the window, gives an exclamation]

MAJOR Here they come !

MR TWIGG *(running to the window)* Where ?

DOCTOR . Don't let them see you looking !

MAJOR Is that the secretary ?

DICKIE *(looking over the MAJOR's shoulder)* It must be

MAJOR By jove, she's a nice looking girl.

[The DOCTOR, despite himself, is drawn to the window, and looks on tiptoe over the MAJOR's shoulder Then he collects himself and comes away]

DOCTOR Major ! Mr Twigg ! Do, please, come away

[MR TWIGG *slinks away from the window, the MAJOR remains peering out*

MAJOR Well, she is a winner

DOCTOR Major !

MAJOR All right You're getting jumpy (*He comes sulkily away from the window*)

DICKIE He's not such a bad-looking chap

DOCTOR It's absurd to let him see you all staring at him

DICKIE He can't see us

[*They all shrink back a little as a man, followed by a girl with an attaché case, passes near the windows on the way round to the front door The bell rings They all start slightly*

MR TWIGG There they are !

DOCTOR (*quietly*) All right—we know Keep calm If he sees you're excited and flustered it'll make it harder for us

MR TWIGG Where do I sit ?

DOCTOR (*pointing to the chair at the right of the table*) There !

MAJOR I should have thought I ought to be on your right

DOCTOR All right, then Mr Twigg, you sit there—on the left

MR TWIGG (*touching the seat*) Here ?

DOCTOR . Yes

[MARY *comes in.*

Yes, Mary ?

MARY A gentleman to see you, sir With a lady

[MARY gives a card to the DOCTOR He reads it and looks over his glasses at MARY]

DOCTOR Very well, Mary Tell him I'm engaged for the moment, but I shall be able to see him presently

MARY Very good, sir

DOCTOR Did you give him *The Times*?

MARY No, sir 'E took it

[She goes out]

MAJOR He would

DOCTOR (*pondering over the card*) Herbert William Butler, address in High Holborn—as I thought (*He looks up and speaks briskly*) Now—we are absolutely clear? Is there any point of any kind we are not decided on?

MAJOR Flat refusal

DOCTOR Certainly We don't know how he will attack We must be ready to parry every blow

MR TWIGG When are you going to tear up the plan before his eyes?

DOCTOR At the end of my first speech Now then—are we all ready?

MAJOR Yes

[The DOCTOR takes the handbell and rings it (*Pointing at the bell*) Butler's death knell! (*He laughs a little wildly*)]

DOCTOR Sit down

[They seat themselves as arranged There is silence Soon MARY pushes open the door, says "Mr Butler and—lady"]

MR BUTLER comes briskly in, followed by his SECRETARY He is a tall, pleasant man

MR BUTLER Doctor Wetherby? (*He pauses*)
Oh, I'm sorry Am I interrupting a meeting of
some kind?

[*The DOCTOR rises and speaks with care*

DOCTOR No, sir I must introduce myself I am
Dr Wetherby, the gentleman on my right is
Major Forrester, on my left is Mr Twigg We
take a very keen interest in this village We
protect it We understand you have something
to say

MR BUTLER (*somewhat embarrassed*) Well—
er——

DOCTOR Will you sit down, sir? (*He motions to
the other chair*) That chair is for your secretary

[*MR BUTLER, the DOCTOR and the GIRL sit
down*

MR BUTLER Well, I really only wanted a little
informal chat, Dr Wetherby

DOCTOR Information has fallen into our hands,
Mr Butler, that makes us feel this is *not* a matter
for an informal chat

MAJOR Hear! Hear!

DOCTOR We have seen your plans

MR BUTLER Oh, you have? Good! Well, per-
haps you'd like me to go into the scheme and
explain it I'm not a jerry-builder, or anything
like that I've got a big scheme to provide
houses in the country for people of moderate
means If a man wants to live in the country at
present, he's either got to take a big house he
can't afford, or else a little cottage without any
convenience at all I'm going to supply just
what he wants—something between the two
Nice little houses, close together to be friendly,
with electric light, and gas, and water, and

sporting facilities I've picked on this place because it's just right Decent healthy woods—chalk soil—pleasant outlook I'm buying up a lot of land round here Naturally it's going to mean a lot to your village It's going to open things up, and bring money into the shops You see, when I've finished building, you'll be right in the middle of it

DOCTOR . Is that all you have to say ?

MR BUTLER Well, I thought we might put our heads together I think we can help each other quite a lot, you know

[*The DOCTOR rises again*]

DOCTOR It was only yesterday, by chance, we heard of your plans It's a great pity you didn't consult us before you began We could have saved you a lot of time and trouble

MR BUTLER Oh, I don't think you could have helped much at first—we had to do the surveying and all that

DOCTOR I don't think I mentioned the word "help," Mr Butler I mean we could have saved you the trouble of starting Certain papers fell into our hands yesterday , they explained all we require to know It is your intention to vandalise our village—to build crude places of amusement——

MR BUTLER Oh, but I'm not going to put up any eyesores !

MAJOR Are you going to tell us that a Steam Sanitary Laundry isn't an eyesore ?

MR BUTLER It depends on the way it's built You'd hardly know the one I'm going to build *was* a laundry

DOCTOR I must make things quite clear, Mr. Butler. We are not objecting to progress We

encourage progress in the right direction We are not country yokels , but we do know sufficient of the world to keep a few corners of it clean We met last night and decided unanimously to forbid your building here

MR BUTLER . Oh, but I say ' You can't do that ' !

DOCTOR From a strictly legal point of view we can't But if you try and build bungalows on these downs, the hand of every man, woman, dog and cat in this village will be against you

MR BUTLER Well, that's absurd !

DOCTOR You will see whether it is absurd. When a whole village rises up in protest, no one can avoid the consequences You may find the wheels will come off your brick-waggon, your scaffolding may collapse in the night , rubbish may choke your drains——

MR BUTLER . What about the police ?

DOCTOR Police-Constable Parsons will help as far as his other duties allow

MR BUTLER Well, if I was interfered with like that, I should have to go and see the magistrate

DOCTOR I am the magistrate It's useless to argue further We're busy men , we have other appointments this morning We've no more time to give you

MR TWIGG (*in a hoarse whisper to the DOCTOR*) : The plan ! What about the plan ?

DOCTOR What ? Oh, yes (*He gropes quickly in his pocket and addresses MR BUTLER*) Among other papers that fell into our hands yesterday was this (*he flourishes the plan from his pocket*)—a plan of your scheme to vandalise our village This, Mr. Butler, is what I think of your plan——

[He takes hold of it to tear it across, but evidently it is made of very tough fabric, for it will not tear

The DOCTOR tugs hard without result

MR BUTLER (*turning to his SECRETARY*) Make a note to order some more of that plan paper Good stuff !

MAJOR (*to the DOCTOR in an undertone*) Try tearing the other way

[The DOCTOR, quivering with anger, turns the plan and tries again It gives with a harsh, ripping sound The DOCTOR throws the pieces aside

DOCTOR That, Mr Butler, is what I think of your plan And the whole village thinks the same

MR BUTLER I don't think the whole village does I was talking to the landlord of the Blue Boar this morning He's all out for my scheme, he sees what it's going to mean to him I left him planning out a big dining-room, and a lot of bedrooms He's going to turn his old stables into a garage

DOCTOR (*aghast*) Rogers !

MR TWIGG Oh, but it can't be Rogers !

MR BUTLER (*nodding*) Mr Rogers, of the Blue Boar

[There is a pause before MR BUTLER speaks again

Do you really think it fair to prevent him adding ten pounds a week to his income ?

DOCTOR (*with sudden wrath*) We are the men who look after Badger's Green—not the inn-keeper ! You've had our decision We are determined to oppose your scheme (*He turns to the MAJOR*) Do you agree, Major ?

MAJOR . Certainly !

DOCTOR Mr Twigg ?

MR TWIGG (*starting slightly*) Er—yes Absolutely

DOCTOR (*quietly*) I think that ends the matter, Mr Butler

[*There is a pause MR BUTLER gives a slight shrug, and rises as if to go*

MR BUTLER Well, gentlemen, I must say it's a big disappointment I was hoping a lot of good might have come out of this talk Most building schemes in the country go wrong because there's no link between the old people and the new A builder just comes along and puts up a lot of houses, the people who buy them never get a chance of understanding the country and taking a pride in it, because there's nobody to show them ! They never get to know the village people They generally get up against them, and everybody's miserable

DOCTOR Exactly ! “ Everybody's miserable ” So why do it ?

MR BUTLER Because no one's tried doing it the right way I know it's difficult, but I think you gentlemen could have done it You see the enormous possibilities of it ? The villagers down here would do anything for you I could see that this morning You understand them absolutely But the great point is you are not villagers yourselves You are men of the world You would understand these new people just as you understand the villagers, you could bring the old and new together The village would still be Badger's Green, it would be three times as big, but it would still have the same spirit if you kept a guiding hand You would get that marvellous energy that comes from blending the best of the old with the best of the new.

DOCTOR It may be all right in theory, Mr Butler—but in practice—— (*He smiles and shakes his head*)

MR BUTLER Why shouldn't it be done ?

DOCTOR It's never happened before

MR BUTLER Because the right men have never come forward to do it *I* couldn't do it—I don't know the village people None of the villagers could do it—they wouldn't understand the newcomers *You* are the only men who could do it, because you understand the outlook of both sides (*He pauses*) It would have been a fine thing to have done A unique thing (*He pauses There is silence until he proceeds*) Take just one point The question of health, Doctor What you could have done for people who've had years of indoor work They'd get a new lease of life if they were shown the way to make the most of the open air I was hoping you would advise me as to the healthiest positions to build I wanted to have a little hospital somewhere down in the valley I hoped you would have advised me in fitting it up I thought perhaps you would supervise it It wouldn't have meant a lot of your time if we had good nurses in charge—but it would have meant a lot to these people if you gave them the same care that you give these villagers (*He pauses*) I do hope you'll think it over, Doctor, and see if you can reconsider it

[*The DOCTOR makes no reply He sits deep in thought MR BUTLER turns to the MAJOR*]

MR BUTLER Then there's the question of sport You've got to get people keen, and there's only one way to do that You've got to find a real organiser to lead them I want to lay out a golf course—tennis, bowls, hockey—good healthy games, and I want the right team

spirit It's only a leader who can bring team spirit—and leaders are not easy to find You can understand why I got excited when I heard people talking in the village about the way the games are run down here I knew there must be a pretty good organiser behind the village sports to get through a programme of thirty races in two hours

MAJOR Twenty minutes out of that was the tea interval

MR BUTLER You got through a whole programme in an hour and forty minutes ?

MAJOR There's nothing in that—if you know what you're doing

MR BUTLER Then why do most sports meetings drag on till it's dark ?

MAJOR Because there's no proper organisation Generally there's half a dozen people trying to run the thing

MR BUTLER Exactly ! They can't trust one man to do it , they generally have stupid little committees that squabble all the time You see what I mean, Major ? If we had one real leader to organise the whole sports, we might do anything ! Look what you do at present with a handful of people , then think of having three times as many to select your teams from We might send tennis players to Wimbledon—men from the Bowling Club might play for the county We should have to see that the small routine work didn't fall on your shoulders Each club would have its own secretary, and you would organise and run the whole thing.

MAJOR You wouldn't want a secretary for each club If you combined golf and tennis in one club, and bowls and hockey in another,

you could run the whole thing with two secretaries, and probably save twenty or thirty pounds a year

[MR BUTLER *throws out his hands in a gesture of admiration*

MR BUTLER There you are !

MAJOR The golf course could be in the valley—and the Club House on the spur of Tupney Downs The whole course would be in view from there

MR BUTLER A splendid idea ! (*He turns to his SECRETARY*) Make a note of that

[*The MAJOR leans forward impressively, and repeats the gist of his suggestion slowly but crisply, for the SECRETARY's benefit*

MAJOR Golf—in valley (*Pause*) Club House—spur Tupney Downs (*pause*)—whole course—thereby—in view—

[*The DOCTOR, who has been lost in thought, gradually becomes aware of the MAJOR's words He turns to him*

DOCTOR As we decline to help Mr Butler, why make suggestions ?

MAJOR Well, damn it—

MR BUTLER (*breaking in*) But, Doctor, I did hope you'd give the matter consideration—

DOCTOR (*breaking in quietly*) We may have judged you a little hastily, Mr Butler, but our duty lies in protecting Badger's Green

MR BUTLER But I'm not going to touch the village !

MAJOR I think a man ought to do all he can for other people

MR BUTLER If someone in the village were very ill—don't you think a hospital nearby would be very valuable ?

DOCTOR There's a serious fault in your plan there, Mr Butler The chief troubles of city workers are traceable to the lungs The valley is damp, but it's dry on the ridge, and the pinewoods have a natural curative property——

[There is a pause before the MAJOR indignantly breaks in]

MAJOR Oh, no, you don't ! D'you think we're going to have a nasty-looking hospital on the spur of Tupney Downs, in full view of the golf and tennis ? *No*, thank you ! You put your hospital in that field behind the churchyard and save transport !

DOCTOR (*icily*) Is illness a theme for lewd jokes ?

MAJOR (*laughing*) Well—damn it——

DOCTOR Is golf to be considered before the sick ?

MAJOR *Certainly !* Health comes first every time You leave Tupney Downs alone I'm not going to have a smell of iodine on the golf links to oblige you !

DOCTOR If I decide that a hospital shall be built on the spur, it *shall* be on the spur !

MR BUTLER (*hastily*) I think I know a fine place ! You know where the pines slope into the valley over there ? (*he waves a hand*)—why not make a clearing and have the hospital right in the woods ?

DOCTOR We might do that ! It would be good to have a kind of sun-trap, open towards the south (*He pauses*) I know the place—where's that plan ?

[He takes the plan out of the fireplace and pieces it together MR BUTLER comes over, and the three of them pore over the map]

DOCTOR Look ! Just here ! Cut away the trees a bit, and you've got your view

MAJOR Yes, but the Golf Club House will be here The first green would be right in your damn sun-trap

DOCTOR (*angrily*) Will you understand once and for all that sports will not be considered until the hospital site has been selected !

MAJOR (*almost shouting*) Now, look here, I've had quite enough of your stupid, selfish ideas !

DOCTOR (*breaking in, white with fury*) And so have I of yours ! If we have any more trouble from *you*, Mr Butler and I will dispense with your services altogether and get a more reasonable man to organise the sports Don't you agree, Mr Butler ?

MAJOR Well ! If that isn't the ruddy limit !

MR BUTLER I do hope we can arrange things so that everybody's satisfied

MAJOR I'm always prepared to give and take But I do resent your attitude I'm not a child

DOCTOR No one suggested you were

MAJOR Anyone would think so by the way you talk to me

DOCTOR (*calm again*) Well, there's no need to have a scene We'll do our best to meet one another fairly

MR BUTLER That's fine

MAJOR You can rely upon me to be reasonable—but I certainly shan't undertake a responsible job like this without a free hand

DOCTOR (*poring over the plan again*) There's a point here, Mr Butler—you've got a children's playground marked—but there are far too many trees round it There's a much more open

place just here, where you get the sun all day
Don't you think so, Major ? This field at the
bottom of Mr Twigg's garden—it only means
taking Twigg's chicken-run away

MAJOR Yes, that's all right It'd be a great
improvement on Twigg's chicken-run It smells
terribly in the summer He never cleans it out

DOCTOR Come outside, Mr Butler, I can
point out where I mean

*[The DOCTOR busily gathers up the two pieces of
the plan and goes towards the door with the MAJOR
and MR BUTLER MR TWIGG has been sitting
quite still with a look of bewilderment on his face
He suddenly jumps to his feet as he sees the others
leaving He is quivering with excitement*

MR TWIGG Well, I never heard anything like
it in all my life !

MAJOR Like what ?

MR TWIGG *(almost sobbing with indignation)*
Like *what*, you say ! Why, like you ! Didn't we
have a meeting last night for three hours ?
Didn't we make up our minds to kick him out ?
And now look what you've done ?

MAJOR What on earth are you shouting about ?
Can't you see the whole position's changed ?
We didn't realise Mr Butler's intentions last
night We only knew half the story

MR. TWIGG We knew everything ! We knew
he wanted to build a lot of ugly bungalows !
And now you just give in—just because he soft
soaps you !

MAJOR *(angrily)* What a fool you are ! Can't
you see an inch before your nose ?

MR TWIGG I can see a long way farther than
you can ! You're turncoats ! That's what you
are !

DOCTOR (*quietly*) There's no need for bad language, Mr Twigg

MAJOR He's mad

[DICKIE *can keep quiet no longer*

DICKIE Are you sure you are doing the right thing, father ?

MAJOR Look there ! Your own son now !

DOCTOR I asked you not to interfere, Dickie

[MR BUTLER *gently takes the DOCTOR's arm, and draws him out into the garden, the DOCTOR glances back, half appealing, half indignant, at his son The MAJOR pauses before following the others into the garden, draws himself up and throws a few last words at DICKIE*

MAJOR When you're a little older, my boy, you'll learn that the greatest test of courage is to change your mind when you realise you're wrong

[*He goes with dignity into the garden*

DICKIE and MR TWIGG are staring after him

The GIRL sits quietly in her chair DICKIE turns to MR TWIGG

DICKIE Look here, I'm not going to stand for this ! Don't you see how he's done it ?

MR TWIGG Soft soap !

DICKIE He's done it by flattery—he's got round them by a trick !

MR TWIGG Well, he didn't get round me !

DICKIE (*pausing and turning to the GIRL*) I'm awfully sorry about all this

THE GIRL (*smiling*) . That's all right

[DICKIE *turns to MR TWIGG*

DICKIE He's turned them round his finger !
He's heard the Major was keen on sport, and
offers him a lot of impossible things He knows
my father would do anything for the village, so
he promises a hospital ! If he'd known you kept
chickens he'd have built you a poultry farm !

MR TWIGG (*helplessly*) Yes, but what can we
do !

DICKIE I'm going to shove my word in now ,
as hard as I damn well can !

[He strides determinedly out of the windows]

*The GIRL rises , MR TWIGG turns back into
the room and speaks to her*

MR TWIGG Did you ever hear anything like
it—in all your life ! Here we sat for hours and
hours last night and kept on agreeing to fight
together—and now look what's happened !

THE GIRL I do understand—exactly—how you
feel !

MR TWIGG (*suspiciously*) Yes, but surely—

THE GIRL I know I'm Mr Butler's secre-
tary—

MR TWIGG Then we're—we're against each
other

THE GIRL We may be on the surface But I'm
certain we feel the same underneath We both
want to keep the country as it is , but develop-
ment's bound to come , nobody can stop it
Isn't it rather a question of making the best of
it—of seeing that it's done carefully ?

MR TWIGG It's these ugly bungalows I can't
stand

THE GIRL But they're not ugly They're
specially designed to suit the country

MR. TWIGG Well—I—I can't help that

THE GIRL London gets worse to live in every year, and people want the country more It's rather rough on them to find the country people against them

MR TWIGG But look at the bottles and paper, and—bits of pie they throw about

THE GIRL Those are the people who don't live in the country, they just come for the day If they lived here they wouldn't do that sort of thing

MR TWIGG I'm glad you—you feel like I do about things

THE GIRL If we can make people really comfortable out here, they'll take a pride in the country Don't you think we could plan out ways of making people keen on country life? When I saw you out on the Green this morning, I thought how much you could help in that way

MR TWIGG Did you—see me?

THE GIRL Wasn't it you—with a butterfly net?

MR TWIGG Well, yes I was out this morning I—I didn't know anyone saw me Some people think it's rather silly

THE GIRL I don't see why People don't think fishing silly, or hunting or shooting

MR TWIGG That's just what I always think

THE GIRL It's not nearly so cruel, either

MR TWIGG I don't do it in any way out of blood lust. I do it as a study I always carry a lethal box and drop them straight in They don't suffer any pain I always keep it rather secret The Major laughs and makes jokes about it in front of me at parties

THE GIRL He doesn't understand.

MR TWIGG I'm glad you think like that

[There is a pause MR TWIGG seems embarrassed and agitated]

You know—you're not a bit like most girls.

THE GIRL *(laughing)* I'm sure I am

MR TWIGG You're not, really Most girls with ideas like yours are plain

THE GIRL Oh, but——

MR TWIGG *(hastily)* No, really—I mean it ! You're so different *(He stops and goes on nervously)* D'you feel a—a sort of sympathy between us ?

THE GIRL Don't you ?

MR TWIGG Er—yes, I—I do I felt it directly you came in I always feel rather—lonely about the country You see I was born here, but I had to take over my father's business in the City I—I didn't like it really, so I came back here

THE GIRL It would be splendid if we could work together and make people understand Couldn't we arrange a series of talks about country life ?

MR TWIGG Do you think they'd really care ?

THE GIRL Wouldn't you care—to have your eyes opened to lovely things ? We could give talks in the evenings, and the next afternoon we could take them for a ramble

MR TWIGG And I could illustrate my lecture with actual specimens in their wild state !

THE GIRL You would let me come ?

MR TWIGG Why, yes ! Of course ! You wouldn't perhaps—er—consider being, as it were, my assistant ?

THE GIRL Rather 'T'll work the lantern at the lectures

MR TWIGG Could we have a magic lantern, and show slides ?

THE GIRL We should have to You'd have to point out things in the pictures with a long stick——

MR TWIGG —and tap the floor with it every time I wanted you to put in the next picture '

[They both laugh together]

THE GIRL We'll have terrific fun

MR TWIGG We'd do a lot of practical work I'm not all theory you know I could show them how to stuff fish

THE GIRL Why—can you stuff fish ?

MR TWIGG Oh, yes—I—I stuff all my own fish

THE GIRL I've often wondered how it's done

MR TWIGG Well, it's not easy It's messy at first You must expect to spoil one or two I should make people begin with little ones You have to be careful to empty the fish completely, or you're bound to get trouble afterwards. Then you hold the fish in shape with frames , if not, it looks just like a sausage, you know

THE GIRL (*smiling*) I know

MR TWIGG Then you dry it, and pack it with sawdust Then you varnish it to make it look wet

THE GIRL I often wondered how you make them look wet

MR TWIGG Just varnish, that's all Then you want three blue beads for the eyes

THE GIRL Three ?

MR TWIGG It's best—in case you break one Of course, most fish have brown eyes, but I

always use blue beads—they give vitality
Then I always make the case myself out of
fretwood.

THE GIRL You do fretwork too ?

MR. TWIGG Oh, yes You must come and see
my home one day I made almost everything in
the house out of fretwood I'm doing a big job
now—but it's rather secret I'm making a coat-
rack for the cricket match to-morrow, to hang
in the marquee on the Green It'll stop people
throwing their coats on the ground and getting
their watches trodden on

THE GIRL You're making it as a surprise ?

MR. TWIGG Well, I told the Major and the
Doctor, but they're so funny I'm the slow
bowler of the team—and they're afraid I might
go and hurt myself But I'm so keen on having
it finished There's only the holes to take the
pegs, and it's done (*He pauses and thinks*) I
could teach fretwork I would take people
round to my workshop

THE GIRL We must have a committee meeting
on our own, and fix up crowds of things

MR. TWIGG I never met anyone before who
was really interested You don't know how nice
it is

THE GIRL We'll have to work very hard

MR. TWIGG We shall have to lead them along
a little at a time, simple lectures at first,
gradually working up to bigger things I'm
glad to feel I can help people like that

[Voices are heard approaching from the garden.

*The DOCTOR and the MAJOR, DICKIE and MR
BUTLER return*

MR. BUTLER Well, really, gentlemen, I must
say you're very hard to understand I lay my

plans before you and explain them as clearly as I can You decide to help——

DOCTOR We made no definite decision

MR BUTLER Yes, but you were very favourably disposed—and then in five minutes you allow your boy to talk you round again It's absolutely a workable scheme We are all men of the world, and after all, your boy's very young

DOCTOR There's a great deal to consider, Mr Butler

MR TWIGG Yes, but Doctor—you said just now——!

DOCTOR All right, Mr Twigg We know exactly what *you* think I'm sorry, Mr Butler, we must have time We can't decide now

MR BUTLER That's quite all right, Doctor There's no need to I'm staying the night in the village I'm going to London to-morrow evening to meet my partners, so I'll call in the morning for your answer I'm sure we shall work together

[He smiles pleasantly and goes to the windows]

Good morning to you, gentlemen

[He goes through the windows His SECRETARY follows, but for a moment she hesitates, and, unseen by the others, gently presses MR TWIGG's limp hand]

There is silence in the room for quite a while before the DOCTOR speaks

DOCTOR : I'm glad we were firm

MAJOR I'm jolly glad I saw through him when I did——

DOCTOR (*quietly*) We made a mistake

[Silence falls again A somewhat nondescript person comes nervously up the path He is wearing white rubber shoes, grey flannels, a dark waistcoat, and an open cricket shirt He taps on the window-frame and peeps in]

THE MAN Beg your pardon, Doctor, we was wondering if you'd forgot about the cricket practice

[The words have a remarkable effect The DOCTOR shakes off his gloom, squares his shoulders, and speaks in a firm voice]

DOCTOR We're coming right away, Grover

GROVER We've mended that big 'ole in the net, sir

DOCTOR Splendid !

[He nods to the MAN with a smile The MAN goes away The DOCTOR turns briskly to the others]

Can't you see our mistake !—to have met him like this ! *(He indicates his morning coat, which he pulls off and throws on a chair He rolls up his sleeves, goes to the sideboard and pulls a pair of white shoes from the cupboard He sits down and changes his shoes)* We flattered him ! We treated him with respect, and he thought we were afraid ! When he comes to-morrow, we'll meet him in our cricket flannels—and tell him to go to hell ! *(He turns to his son)* Dickie, get the ball, there's a good fellow It's on the mantelpiece in the breakfast-room—and my pads—the old ones ! Don't touch the others

DICKIE (*going out*) Righto

MAJOR With all those stout fellows at the back of us, he won't dare to do anything !

DOCTOR Of course he won't ! It's bluff ! He's just a bluffer (*He rises with his white shoes on, and turns to MR TWIGG*) Mr Twigg, you know how that table goes through the door—take it back into the dining-room, there's a good chap !

[MR TWIGG *has been standing rather sadly at the windows, gazing over the Green He blinks once or twice, shakes his head to throw off his dreams, and slowly begins to clear the papers from the table*

MAJOR (*rolling up his sleeves*) It's like Drake, isn't it ? Playing bowls, and then going out and beating the Spaniards ! (*He laughs heartily*)

[DICKIE *returns with the ball, pads, and a bat*

Ah ! Dickie ! that your new bat ?

DICKIE I've had it most of the season

MAJOR (*examining it critically*) Got a crack here Be careful about that Bind it with some tape

[MR TWIGG *has got the table to the door, and pushed it half way through He stands undecided for a moment—nearly climbs over it, but hesitates He turns and goes out through the French windows*

DOCTOR (*twisting the ball artfully between his fingers*) This time to-morrow we shall be just getting ready for the match All ready ? Come on ! Half an hour's good practice before lunch

MAJOR (*looking round*) Where's Twigg ? He must get in some bowling practice

DOCTOR He was here just now—he was moving that table

MAJOR . Look where he's left it ! What a queer fellow he is

DOCTOR Never mind—he'll find out where we've gone—thank God for some fresh air

[They go together down the path and across the Green MR TWIGG has apparently reached the other end of the table, out in the hall, for it gives a little twist, and slowly disappears through the door]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

Towards noon on Wednesday Another lovely day

The room is empty There is a tap on the door, a pause, and the MAID comes in She looks round, and speaks to someone in the passage

MARY The Doctor's out on the Green practising 'is cricket Come in, Mr Rogers I'll go and tell 'im

MR ROGERS No, don't bother 'im, miss—if 'e's out cricketing I'll wait a bit.

[MR ROGERS is plump and shuny, with a fat face and heavy-lidded eyes He sits down, pulling up the knees of his tight, shiny trousers]

MARY 'E said 'e'd be back before twelve—it's gone 'arf-past eleven

MR ROGERS That's all right.

[There is a pause]

Lovely day for the match.

MARY Grand

MR ROGERS Think we're goin' to win ?

MARY (*archly*) Depends 'oo you call "we"

MR. ROGERS Er course—you got connections with Rag'olt, ain't you ?

MARY 'Erb's their wicket-keeper

MR ROGERS Well, you *are* in a predicament and no mistake ! Fiancé on one side—boss on the other ! 'Oo'er you going to shout for ?

MARY I ain't the *sort* that shouts

MR ROGERS Well, 'oo'er you supporting ?

MARY Both

MR ROGERS Sort o' Jack o' both sides ! *Fill o' both sides, I should say (He laughs and repeats the joke to himself for memory's sake) Fill o' both sides*

MARY You come about the trouble, Mr Rogers ?

[MR ROGERS immediately becomes secretive

MR ROGERS Trouble ? 'Ow d'you mean ?

MARY Well, you know what I mean ! You oughter seen the carryings on up 'ere yesterday—*shouting* at each other, they was

MR ROGERS It ain't no laughing matter

MARY I *ain't* laughing

MR ROGERS Nor a matter for public discussion

MARY (*after a pause*) . No.

[*Silence falls* MARY, somewhat abashed, *tudres the room a bit, and goes to the windows* MR ROGERS *sits, breathing heavily and blinking*

'Ere's the Doctor—comin'.

[MR ROGERS *rises and pulls down his trousers where they have rucked up tightly round his knees* The DOCTOR and the MAJOR are heard approaching. They come through the gate and up the path They are both in white flannels and striped cricket caps, both carry coloured blazers over their arms,

and a few pads and bats They are mopping their brows with large handkerchiefs

DOCTOR (*as they come up the path*) Have an early lunch and then a lie-down Can't have you getting tired

MAJOR You'd better take a rest, too It's going to be scorching out there this afternoon

[They come into the room]

DOCTOR Ah! Rogers You want the new scoring-book Here you are

[He goes to the desk and produces a large flat book, which he hands to MR ROGERS]

MR ROGERS Thank you, sir (*He hesitates*) As a matterer fact, sir—there was another thing I just wanted a word about

[The DOCTOR's face becomes grim]

DOCTOR Yes?

MR ROGERS I'm sorry to 'ear, sir, about your attitood over Mr Butler (*He pauses*) 'Er course—I know it ain't nice 'aving strangers butting in—

DOCTOR Well?

MR ROGERS (*very embarrassed*) Well, all the same, a man of business 'as got to look *after* 'is business—

DOCTOR Mr Butler must go and look after his business somewhere else

MR ROGERS Yes, sir, but that wasn't exactly my meaning You see, trade's never too good, custom's limited 'ere Another couple of 'undred people living 'ereabouts would make a power of difference—what with their friends comin' to see 'em—wanting beds for the night—

DOCTOR Are you thinking now of the village or yourself?

MR ROGERS I'm thinkin' of all us folks in trade

DOCTOR Do I assume you are speaking on behalf of *all* the traders in the village?

MR ROGERS Well, sir, some of us 'ad a bit of a talk at my place last night

DOCTOR In the face of the knowledge that the Major, Mr Twigg and myself were fighting to save you from this man?

MR ROGERS Well—I——

DOCTOR You doubted us—after all we do for the village?

MR ROGERS Nobody's denying what you gentlemen do, Doctor—but we just feel we oughter move with the times

DOCTOR Your father kept the Blue Boar, did he ever hanker after “moving with the times”?

MR ROGERS Well, 'e got all the new business what come in with bicycling—but I'm denied the motoring folks, 'cos of the roads. If Mr Butler opened things up, it'd make a power of difference to me, and all of us trade folk

DOCTOR Has Mr Butler told you that he intends to build a large hotel here?

[MR ROGERS' jaw drops]

MR ROGERS No?

DOCTOR Naturally he didn't. He is a deceitful man, Rogers. Take very great care. He intends to build a large hotel with gold letters six feet high, lit up by night. A string band will play, your customers will flock there and you will be ruined. But there's no need for you to worry.

We are fighting him and we shall win Now look here, I want you to be very careful in starting this new score-book the last one got hopelessly muddled and very dirty towards the end The scorers *must* dry their fingers after tea I found butter on several pages, and a piece of water-cress in the binding You must carry a penknife, too—and score with a sharp pencil Also I don't like the enormous noughts you draw when a batsman is unfortunate and fails to score It's an irritating habit of yours (*He looks at his watch*) Good gracious ' It's nearly twelve ' You'd better see about getting the scoring-board across to the marquee And do tell the boy to be more careful in collecting the numbers together afterwards I found a 7 in the grass last night

MR ROGERS I've bin looking all over the place for that 7 '

[*The DOCTOR goes to the sideboard and brings out a tin number plate with a large white 7 on it*]

DOCTOR I can't imagine how it was left Doesn't the boy *count* them ?

MR ROGERS 'E ought to

DOCTOR Well, do see that he does All right, Rogers I'll see you later And once again, don't worry You can trust me to protect the Blue Boar from ruin.

MR ROGERS Well, it's very good of you, Doctor, but——

DOCTOR (*with a wave of his hand*) Don't thank me for doing my duty I'm not a man to stand by and watch you go to the workhouse

[*The DOCTOR smiles, and waves a friendly dismissal*]

MR ROGERS *disappears uncomfortably through the French windows*

The DOCTOR turns to the MAJOR

DOCTOR Have a glass of lemon squash ?

MAJOR I will, thanks—I'm as dry as a bone

DOCTOR Say when——

MAJOR Woh ! That's enough

DOCTOR Soda—or water ?

MAJOR Water, I think It's more quenching

DOCTOR (*filling the MAJOR's glass*) You have to look after these people like a nurse (*He hands a glass to the MAJOR and takes one himself*) Well, here's to our success this afternoon !

MAJOR Hear ! hear !

[*They drink and sit down The DOCTOR suddenly looks very tired*]

DOCTOR I *do* wish we hadn't got this trouble hanging over our heads, on a day like this of all days (*He sighs*)

MAJOR Let's forget all about it Let him come and find us like this It'll make him think

[*DICKIE comes in, also dressed in flannels, and a college blazer*]

MAJOR Ah, Dickie ! Feeling pretty fit ?

DICKIE Fine, thanks ! Have you been out practising ?

MAJOR Yes, we've had half an hour It's beginning to get hot It'll be scorching this afternoon

DICKIE How are you bowling ? All right ?

MAJOR . Pretty good

DICKIE I'd like to have a knock—are you going out again ?

MAJOR Yes , we came in to see if Twigg was here Have you seen him ?

DICKIE He said he'd be here at eleven He's got to have some practice this morning to get his fingers loose

MAJOR He is the limit Forgotten all about it, I expect

DICKIE I saw him as I came back from the village—he was in his workshop I heard his fretsaw working

[There is a tense silence The DOCTOR and the MAJOR look at one another in sudden fear]

DOCTOR *(slowly and quietly)* Did you say—in his workshop?

DICKIE Yes, I saw his head through the window

DOCTOR I told him to keep right away from his fretwork till after the match to-day

MAJOR He promised faithfully he would ' Are you certain it was Twigg?

DICKIE It couldn't have been anyone else

MAJOR I've a good mind to burn that damn workshop down ' You know what he is with his fretwork Don't you remember that pipe-rack he made? The awful cuts he got? He couldn't play the organ for a month He'll never finish a coat-rack alive '

DOCTOR I can't believe he would break a promise

MAJOR I don't know He behaved very suspiciously when we spoke to him about it Don't you remember the way he shuffled his feet and wouldn't look us in the eye?

DICKIE *(at the window)* . Here he comes now, across the Green

DOCTOR *(with intense relief)* : Thank goodness for that '

DICKIE (*staring hard across the Green*) · Good God !

MAJOR (*starting up*) What is it, Dickie ?

[DICKIE turns into the room

DICKIE I'm afraid something's happened—he's got his arm in a sling, his left arm, his bowling arm !

[*There is silence The DOCTOR and the MAJOR stand as if turned to stone*

MAJOR (*in a trembling voice*) It's that damn coat-rack ! There isn't another slow bowler in the village if Twigg can't play !

[*The DOCTOR speaks His words come hoarsely and brokenly*

DOCTOR If Twigg's betrayed us—if he's broken his promise—if he's been doing his fretwork and cut his hand—I shall never, *never* speak to him again

MAJOR (*clenching his hands*) My God, I'll give him hell !

DOCTOR Leave *me* to deal with him, Major I'm President of the Club

MAJOR It's the captain's job ! You leave him to me !

[*Silence falls The MAJOR and the DOCTOR stand back in the shadows and gaze at the open, sunlit window*

Presently, in the silence, MR TWIGG creeps in He is dressed in an old tweed suit—he is hatless and pale His left arm is slung in an old green handkerchief, his hand protrudes, covered in a bulky, ill-made bandage He hesitates on the threshold, blinking to accustom his eyes from the glare of the sunlit Green He sees the DOCTOR and the MAJOR standing like pale statues in the shadows He gives a little

shudder, and looks at them in dumb appeal. There is no word for a while. Then MR TWIGG speaks in a thin, dry voice

MR TWIGG I'm awfully sorry The chisel slipped

[Again there is silence. Then the DOCTOR speaks, his words come like an icy stream]

DOCTOR Five minutes ago, Mr Twigg, I thought of you as a friend of mine, an honourable man whose word was his bond. Now I know you to be a deceitful man—a man who puts his own mean selfish pleasure before the honour of the village at cricket.

MAJOR *(quivering with anger)* You—bloody fool!

DOCTOR You care nothing for the village—you craved only to flaunt your fretwork before the eyes of strangers.

MAJOR D'you suppose anybody was going to care a damn for your idiotic coat-rack?

DOCTOR You've ruined our chances in the match this afternoon, the match above all others that we hoped to win.

MAJOR ——— dirty—low-down trick

DOCTOR I've nothing further to say, Mr Twigg, except that the village is the sadder by knowing it has in its midst a man who breaks his word.

[MR TWIGG has stood quite still, gazing in front of him with an expression of unspeakable misery. The corners of his mouth quiver, he gives a little choking sigh and covers his face with his uninjured hand. He sways, and DICKIE quickly steps forward]

DICKIE Look out! He's fainting!

[DICKIE steadies MR TWIGG and leads him to a

chair The pale anger in the DOCTOR's face softens to shame , he is by MR TWIGG's side, soothing him

DICKIE Undo his collar !

MAJOR Put a key down his neck !

DOCTOR All right, Major, all right Leave him to me (*He turns and calls*) Mary ! Mary ! (*He picks up the bell, rings it and turns back to MR TWIGG He speaks very softly*) I'm very, very sorry, Mr Twigg

MR TWIGG (*through convulsive sobs*) I—feel—so beastly I just want to go and die

DOCTOR Dickie ! Run and get a basin of water and my surgical box

[*DICKIE hurries away, passing MARY, who hurries in*

MARY Did you ring, sir ?

DOCTOR Yes, Mary Bring the decanter of brandy Here's the key

[*MARY hurries away*

MR TWIGG I—I don't think I can take any brandy

DOCTOR Just a nice drop of sherry ?

MR TWIGG Well—just a small drop

DOCTOR Major ! A glass of sherry

[*The MAJOR hurries to the sideboard*

You must try and forgive me, Mr Twigg I behaved like a beast

MR TWIGG I didn't *want* the chisel to slip

DOCTOR Of course you didn't

[*The MAJOR returns with the flagon of sherry , he pours out a glass and hands it to MR TWIGG*

MAJOR : Here—put that inside you

MR TWIGG I—I don't think I can take it after all I—I feel so frightfully funny—all over

MAJOR Come on, drink it up !

[He pushes the drink into MR TWIGG's hand with rough kindness, and turns away, muttering "Damn fool !" MR TWIGG rolls his eyes miserably over the edge of the glass and takes a sip

The door opens and MRS WETHERBY hurries in
MRS W Arthur, what has happened ? Poor Mr Twigg ! *(She goes over to MR TWIGG in dismay)*

DOCTOR It's all right, Mabel—it's quite all right !

MR TWIGG *(almost proudly)* The chisel slipped
MRS W Can't I do anything ? Why ! you haven't given him a cushion ! *(She gets a cushion and stuffs it behind MR TWIGG)*

DOCTOR Now then, let me have a look I must dress it properly *(He begins to unwind the ungainly bandage from MR TWIGG's hand)*

MRS W Mrs Forrester's in the breakfast-room, helping with the tea Hadn't she better go for Mr Twigg's housekeeper—or shall I send a message ?

MR. TWIGG Oh, you are so kind—but don't bother, please My housekeeper fainted when she saw what I'd done, but she was coming to all right as I left

[MRS FORRESTER, the MAJOR's wife, hurries in

MRS F Has Mr Twigg hurt himself ? *(She sees the bandage being unwound)* Oh—dear—

MAJOR *(testily)* It's all right, Joan Don't fuss

[The DOCTOR is coming towards the end of the bandage, which begins to be rather bloodstained He very tenderly removes the last portion MR TWIGG winces in pain, but keeps quite quiet

DOCTOR (*soothingly*) *There we are ! (He examines the finger carefully)* Oh, yes—it's nothing serious—a nasty cut, but not dangerous

MAJOR (*peering at the finger*) Will he be able to play ?

DOCTOR My dear Major—look ! (*he holds up the finger*)—the finger he spins the ball with

MAJOR What a fool the man is !

[*DICKIE hurries in with the bowl of water He puts it on the small table beside the DOCTOR, removing the flagon of sherry to the floor beside MR TWIGG*

MARY *hurries in, very distressed*

MARY I don't think you gave me the right key, sir, this one don't turn

DOCTOR Never mind, Mary, we shan't want the brandy after all

[*There is a ring at the bell*

MRS W I expect that's Mrs Bunting with the scones Take them into the breakfast-room, Mary

MAJOR (*to his wife*) Hadn't you better be getting on with the tea ? It's past twelve, they'll be round with the trolley soon

[*The LADIES go slowly towards the door*

MRS W Do say if you want anything, Mr Twigg—won't you ?

MRS F I'll go and fetch your housekeeper, if you like ?

MAJOR Don't fuss, Joan—get on with the teas

[*The LADIES go out*

Extraordinary what a fuss women make !

MR TWIGG I was being so careful I'd finished the whole thing. There was just a little bit of

rough stuff to take off one end I used the chisel,
and it slipped

DOCTOR (*carefully re-dressing the wound after bathing it*). Never mind, Mr Twigg The coat-rack's going to be fine, hanging up in the marquee It'll stop all the coats being thrown on the ground You *have* done something for the village, after all

MR TWIGG Well, I do try

[*The MAJOR is pacing irritably to and fro,*

DICKIE *is gazing gloomily out of the window*

MAJOR What on earth are we going to do? With Hobson on the sick-list and Jones away, there isn't a man in the village fit to put in the team

DICKIE What about Rogers?

MAJOR He's hopeless He's always so bleary in the afternoons

DICKIE Well, who on earth *is* there?

[*MARY has come in, and is hovering nervously in the background She addresses the DOCTOR*

MARY There's Mr Butler, sir

[*There is a general start of surprise, the MAJOR looks at the DOCTOR in dismay*

MAJOR Good heavens! I'd forgotten *that* wretched man was due!

DOCTOR We can't see him! We've enough trouble as it is Tell him we can't see him, Mary

DICKIE Just a minute What *about* Mr Butler?

MAJOR What d'you mean?

DICKIE He's not such a bad fellow They tell me he was talking at the Blue Boar last night Apparently he's played a bit of cricket

MAJOR You're not suggesting he plays for *us*?

DICKIE Why not ?

MAJOR I wouldn't be seen dead playing with him

DICKIE Even if it made the difference between winning or losing against Ragholt ?

MAJOR Even if it means that !

DOCTOR Er—Mary, wait outside We'll let you know our decision in a few moments (*He turns to DICKIE*) He'd never play—even if we asked him, Dickie

DICKIE You don't often find a keen man refusing a game Besides, what's to prevent us playing a deeper game as well ? He told us yesterday he's got to catch the six o'clock from Winchester

MAJOR Well ?

DICKIE Can you imagine any man leaving for a train in the middle of an innings ? Or just as he's got his length with the ball ?

MAJOR No, I can't I do see your idea—but it's very dangerous

DICKIE He'd never leave if the game were getting thrilling, suppose he lost his train and missed his meeting ?

MAJOR It's a long chance

DICKIE Isn't it worth it ? To fill our team, and possibly knock his plan on the head ?

MAJOR Supposing he *did* go—halfway through ?

DICKIE Well, at least we'd have him a couple of hours—he may be a useful man

MAJOR Well, I don't mind They say "all's fair in love and war," don't they ?

DOCTOR (*absently*) Er—yes (*He goes to the door and speaks to MARY.*) Ask Mr. Butler in, Mary,

DICKIE We must flatter him. Butter him up a bit

MAJOR What shall we do ? Say we've heard he's a great cricketer ?

DICKIE No, be careful Not a "great" cricketer Begin by saying we've heard the villagers talking about him

MAJOR That's the line ! Look out !

[MARY opens the door and ushers MR BUTLER and his SECRETARY in

MR BUTLER (*joyally*) Ah, Doctor ! You look like business !

DOCTOR Er—yes We've got our most important match to-day Er—will you have a glass of sherry, Mr Butler ?

MR BUTLER (*surprised*) That's very nice of you

[*They look for the sherry bottle which is down behind MR TWIGG's chair, where DICKIE put it when he brought in the bowl of water*

DOCTOR (*searching*) That's funny Mary must have taken it away

[*He goes towards the door, but MR BUTLER detains him*

MR BUTLER . Please don't bother, Doctor I've just had the pleasure of meeting your wife She's got a wonderful pile of tea out there

DOCTOR Yes , we're trying to do everything as well as possible We are playing our great rivals—a village called Ragholt

MR BUTLER Is that the place you come through—just before here ?

DOCTOR Yes, in the valley , you drop down into it from the main road.

MR BUTLER Charming little place I nearly as possible decided on Ragholt instead of here

[*The DOCTOR and the MAJOR exchange excited glances*]

DOCTOR It's always a terrific game, but Ragholt has beaten us three years running. We were determined to win to-day. Everything was in our favour, we have my son with us, the Major is bowling splendidly this year, and now a most terrible misfortune has occurred.

[*He waves despairingly towards MR TWIGG.*]

MR TWIGG *displays his bandaged hand*

MR BUTLER What a pity!

DOCTOR Mr Twigg, our only slow bowler, was completing a coat-rack for the marquee——

MR TWIGG The chisel slipped

MR BUTLER How sickening!

DOCTOR It made a deep wound in the finger he spins the ball with

[*MR BUTLER draws in his breath to denote sympathy*]

DOCTOR You see what an awful blow it is? You are a cricketer yourself—you understand. We have no other man to play.

MR BUTLER How did you know I was a cricketer?

DOCTOR (*laughing*) Villagers talk.

MR BUTLER They don't waste much time. We were having a bit of gossip down at the inn last night—fancy it getting up to you!

DOCTOR A thought occurred to us just before you came, Mr Butler. We knew yesterday you were a sportsman—a white man—despite our differences in the world of business. But it wasn't till to-day we knew you were a cricketer. A faint hope came to us——

MR. TWIGG I'd lend you my white flannel trousers

MAJOR (*anxiously*) Shut up !

DOCTOR —a wild hope—that perhaps you would fill the breach

MR BUTLER (*shaking his head*) Well, I'm afraid——

DOCTOR (*interrupting*) There's no need for me to tell you what our gratitude would be—how the whole village would rise and cheer you.

MR BUTLER It's a pity—I'd like to play, but my train's at six from Winchester I've got a car coming for me at half-past five

DOCTOR But we start at 2 30 For three hours we should have you

MR BUTLER But I'm not even a member of your Club !

DOCTOR We can soon put that right ! Major, fill in a form , there's one on my desk

[*The MAJOR hurries to the desk.*]

MR BUTLER I don't think I dâre Supposing at half-past four, I was batting—and the match was critical——

DOCTOR We must risk that We may win the game in two hours

MR. BUTLER . There's no other train I meet my directors in London this evening They've all got their pet schemes to develop other places I must get my word in to-night

MAJOR (*looking up from the form*) Herbert William Butler, isn't it ?

DOCTOR Yes. (*He dives into his pocket and produces MR. BUTLER's card—he reads MR BUTLER's address to the MAJOR—"Burford House, High Holborn"*—and hands the MAJOR the card.)

MR BUTLER It isn't fair on you or me, if I were to play

DOCTOR Have you ever played in a genuine game on a village green ?

MR BUTLER Not a real genuine village green

DOCTOR It's something you will never forget
The smooth green—the great elms round it—the
old houses peering out of the shade—the lovely
quiet downs beyond—old Hobson's mare watching
over a gate—people lying under the trees—the
glorious firm "chock" of the ball against
the bat You won't forget it

MAJOR (*advancing with the completed form*)
There's a quorum, isn't there ? You and me—
and Twigg ? We can have a committee meeting
right away. (*He reads*)

"Member for Election

Name Herbert William Butler

Occupation Company Director

Address Burford House, High Holborn

Proposed by Doctor Wetherby

Seconded by Major Forrester "

(*He looks up*) Those in favour ?

[*The DOCTOR and MR TWIGG raise their hands*

MAJOR Carried *nem con*

[*The DOCTOR smiles and shakes MR. BUTLER by the hand*

DOCTOR The colours are red, green and yellow.
Mr Twigg will see that you get a straw-hat-band
You can't imagine what this means to us,
Mr Butler It's splendid of you

MAJOR (*holding out his hand*) You're a white
man, you've made a true friend

DOCTOR . I've got a splendid idea ! You know

the Vicar's little house—next to the Vicarage ?
Mr Butler will take it for a week-end cottage.
He'll come and play as a regular member

MR BUTLER (*laughing*) Well—you *are* the limit !

DOCTOR Wait till you see the cottage It's a lovely little place Now—what about clothes for Mr Butler ? I can fix him up with a shirt and boots

MAJOR I can do the trousers—pity Twigg's such a little man Mr Butler could have had his things

DOCTOR It's half-past twelve ! We must have a look round Come along, Mr Butler, you must see the pitch You *do* bowl, don't you ?

MR BUTLER Well, I'm not a left-hander

DOCTOR But you *do* bowl ?

MR BUTLER A bit.

DOCTOR Splendid ! Slow ?

MR BUTLER Slow medium .

DOCTOR Magnificent ! You must decide which end you'd like to bowl from Come along !

MR BUTLER I *must* go in five hours' time

DOCTOR Five hours ! Empires have been made in five hours

[*They go out together, talking and laughing.*]

DICKIE *lingers behind* The GIRL *has been forgotten* He turns to her

DICKIE Pity no one introduces us, isn't it ?

THE GIRL (*laughing*) It is, rather

DICKIE My mother's doing tea for the players this afternoon—like to help ?

THE GIRL I'd love to Sure I shan't be in the way ?

DICKIE Everybody who helps'll be in the way
One more or less won't matter My mother's
over at the marquee now, getting things ready
Care to come across ?

THE GIRL I'd love to (*She turns to Mr TWIGG
as they go out*) I'm so sorry, Mr Twigg

DICKIE (*suddenly remembering*) Oh ! How's the
hand ?

MR TWIGG A little easier thank you, Dickie
It still throbs a bit

DICKIE Keep it slung well up

[*DICKIE and the GIRL go out together*

MR. TWIGG *is alone, very tired and sad He feebly
sips his sherry*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE I

The interior of a white marquee which has been pitched to overlook the Village Green

It has two openings. One looks out towards the cricket pitch, which is just out of view, the other opens to the side. A trestle table stands along the side of the tent between the openings. There is also a small table and two chairs for the scorers. Otherwise the tent is empty. It is a little after mudday. The sun is baking the Green outside.

MR ROGERS comes in with a pile of tin scoring-numbers under one arm, and the new scoring-book under the other. He is dressed as he was when he went to see the DOCTOR, except that he is now wearing a straw hat with a bright band round it, and a pair of white shoes. He is followed by a small harassed BOY, who is staggering under the weight of a large scoring-board. MR ROGERS drops the pile of numbers on the trestle table, and turns to the BOY, who is trying to get the score-board through the opening.

MR ROGERS What's the good o' trying to get the board in 'ere? Stand it up outside. No! not there—over on the right.

[The BOY puts the board up and sighs with relief.]

Now look 'ere, George! Come inside. There's thirty-two numbers 'ere—see? And when you take 'em back there's got to be thirty-two—see? Last week you left one of them seven's out on the grass—lying out there rusting in the rain all night. The Doctor found it 'imself. Don't allow it to 'appen again, see? Else we'll 'ave Charlie to put the numbers up next week. Now take 'em out and sort 'em on this bit of noospaper. Then cut back for yer dinner. Be 'ere at two-fifteen.

[The BOY takes the numbers and—goes outside.]

MR ROGERS *picks up the scoring-table and places it with great care so that he can secure a good view of the cricket pitch. He then places the chairs behind it. He puts the score-book on the table, produces a pencil, and laboriously sharpens it to a point.*

A WOMAN *appears, carrying a large tea-urn, she is followed by a BOY with two buckets of cold tea. Behind comes a smaller BOY with a bundle of sticks. The WOMAN dumps the tea-urn on the table, and removes the lid. The BOY with the buckets pours in the tea. MR ROGERS looks on suspiciously.*

You ain't goin' to try and 'ot that tea up in 'ere ?

WOMAN Mrs Wetherby said "Put the urn on the table"

MR ROGERS Well, 'ow are you goin' to 'ot the tea up ?

WOMAN That's none o' my business I do what I'm told

MR ROGERS What's all them sticks for ?

WOMAN To make a fire

BOY To 'ot the tea up, Mrs Wetherby said

MR ROGERS You can't light a lot o' sticks in 'ere

BOY Mrs Wetherby said "Light the sticks outside"

MR ROGERS What you want to do's to make a fire outside and 'ot the tea in cans—then pour it in the urn

[MR ROGERS' eye falls on the urn. *Nobody has noticed that the tap was turned on when the BOY poured the tea in.*

(Shouting) Hi ! Look at all that bloomin' tea running out !

[There is a rush to the urn, but the urn is a new one, and the tap is very stiff]

Damn thing's stuck *(He puts his thumb over the spout and turns to the Boy)* 'Ere—gimme an 'ankerchief!

[One of the Boys produces a dirty handkerchief from his pocket MR ROGERS winds it round the tap]

Wants a drop of oil

[They struggle with the tap, and finally get it to turn off]

That's got it Lucky I noticed when I did

[MR ROGERS carefully removes the handkerchief from the tap and squeezes it into the urn. He removes his straw hat, and wipes his brow with the back of his hand]

Can't understand why they couldn't 'ave a proper caterer Silly, leaving a big job like this to amateurs 'Spose they never get the tea 'ot at all?

WOMAN Well, arf of it's gorn .

MR. ROGERS That don't lift the responsibility for what's left

[A small Boy, propelling a handcart, and escorted by MRS WETHERBY and MRS FORRESTER, draws up outside the marquee. They bring in piles of plates, cups, saucers, bread and butter and cake]

(Lifting his hat) Good morning, mam

MRS W Good morning, Mr Rogers *(She is carrying a small spirit-burning contrivance)* Do you understand these things? It fits under the urn.

[MR ROGERS becomes useful]

MR. ROGERS . That's it, mam—fits like this. You want some methylated

MRS W. Yes, of course we shall

MR ROGERS You want to 'eat up the tea outside—thus'll only do to keep it 'ot

MRS W Yes (*She turns to the Boy with the sticks*) Charlie—make a nice fire out over there—beyond those trees, so that the smoke won't blow in here

Boy Yes, mam

MRS W (*looking into the urn*) Why, there's not nearly enough tea, Mrs Evans We shall want a lot more Whatever made you put it straight into the urn?

WOMAN. Well, mam, I thought it was the place

MRS W We shall have to draw it off into the buckets again You'll have to make quite a lot more

WOMAN Very good, mam

[*The WOMAN goes out with one of the buckets.*]

MRS WETHERBY *struggles with the tap, which won't turn on* MR ROGERS *steps forward*

MR ROGERS Allow me, mam (*He also struggles considerably before it turns*) Bit stiff—wants a bit of oil

MRS. F (*pausing from bringing in the tea things*) What about a bit of butter?

MR ROGERS That'll do, mam (*He rubs a piece of butter on the tap*)

MRS W. (*to the Boy who is catching the tea in the bucket*) When you've got it all, take it outside to where you are making the fire Tommy's bringing a big cauldron up from Mr. Hobson's

MRS F. Shall we unpack now?

MRS W · Oh, I think we'd better leave it, the bread and butter would get terribly dry. We'll cut the cake just before tea so that it's quite fresh

MRS F Very well Don't forget to bring the flowers I'll bring the vases this afternoon

MRS W And, Mr Rogers, I *wonder* if you could arrange for some methylated ?

MR ROGERS Very good, mam I'll get Jim to bring up a bottle

MRS W That's awfully kind of you (*She takes a glance round*) Now I think we'll leave everything as it is till this afternoon I feel nearly dead

MRS F It's such a big business

MRS W What time ought tea to be ready ?

MR ROGERS Well, it depends on the game, mam Four o'clock, unless an innings is nearly finished Then we'd wait I'll be 'ere all the time, mam I'll give you the wink

MRS W Thank you (*To MRS FORRESTER*) Our menfolk'll be clamouring for lunch if we don't go

[*The LADIES leave The BOY has got the bucket filled with tea and is struggling to turn off the tap The tea is beginning to run over He calls in a panic to MR ROGERS, who is just leaving the tent*]

BOY H! ' Mr Rogers ' 'Elp with this tap !

MR ROGERS It's all right—rub the butter in.

BOY It won't turn no'ow

MR. ROGERS Well, where's the other bucket ?

BOY Mrs Evans took it

[MR ROGERS goes to help—struggles with the tap, and finally loses his temper

MR ROGERS I can't help the damn thing !
Oughter bin seen to afore it was used (*He looks into the urn*) Ain't more'n a cupful left Better leave it

[*He goes out*

The BOY removes the bucket, regretfully watches the remaining tea drain away, and goes out carrying what he has saved

Voices are heard approaching.

DOCTOR (*outside*) Come and have a look at the marquee, Mr Butler

[*The DOCTOR, the MAJOR and MR BUTLER stroll in MR BUTLER has a pair of white trousers over his arm*

DOCTOR We found it difficult to get a plain white one , contractors have a perfect mania for supplying hideous striped ones In fact, we had to send one back , it was a great rush to get this in time

MAJOR It's a lot better than a dusty old pavilion

DOCTOR There's no comparison

MR BUTLER You get quite a crowd, I suppose ?

DOCTOR We expect eighty or ninety people here to-day , in fact this weather may bring it up to three figures

MR BUTLER (*looking at the piles of tea things*) - Why ! Aren't those all the provisions I saw up at your house just now ? You've got them over pretty smartly

MAJOR . Yes, we have to organise things pretty

thoroughly You can't imagine the details there are to attend to , we have a special sub-committee to look after it

DOCTOR Now, I think you ought to see the pitch , there's a slight slope from the farther end. You may find it suits you better than bowling from this end

MAJOR You'd better explain to me how you like your fielders placed It'll save time

DOCTOR I hoped my wife would be here—apparently she's gone—but it doesn't matter I want you to join us in a modest lunch, Mr Butler

MR BUTLER Well, that's very kind of you, but I do think I ought to go back to the Blue Boar I'd better pack my bag and bring it with me The car can pick me up here

DOCTOR Oh, but you must lunch with us If you have it at the Blue Boar, Rogers will give you a heavy plate of red meat—very bad to play on in a hot sun We are just having a little boiled white fish, and fruit

MR BUTLER Well, it's very good of you, Doctor It certainly sounds more attractive than steak pudding

[They laugh together as they walk to the opening facing the Green Just outside, the DOCTOR points into the distance.]

DOCTOR There's the little house I spoke about. The Vicar only wants a pound a week Take it for a week-end cottage, and play for us on Saturdays

MR BUTLER . I wish I could

MAJOR As a full member of the Club, it's your duty.

DOCTOR I prophesy Mr Butler will be a Vice-President in the very near future

MR BUTLER Oh, I haven't deserved that yet.

[*THEY walk out together laughing*]

DOCTOR Well, now you must come and see the pitch

[*They go out on to the Green*]

Some BOYS appear and walk by, carrying some garden seats The MAJOR pauses for a moment to superintend

MAJOR Are those Mrs Graham's garden seats?

BOYS (*in chorus*) Yes, sir

MAJOR Well, be most careful with them. The paint was scratched on one last year. See that nobody stands on them.

BOYS (*in chorus*) Yes, sir

[*The MAJOR goes on to overtake the others.*]

DICKIE and the GIRL come through the side opening.
DICKIE glances round and turns to the GIRL.

DICKIE Mother seems to have cleared off. It doesn't matter, though. If you turn up at half-past two and lend a hand, there's bound to be plenty to do.

THE GIRL I'm certain to be in the way.

DICKIE That doesn't matter. There wouldn't be enough to do if people didn't get in the way.

THE GIRL Can I bring anything? I could buy some fruit in the village.

DICKIE Oh, Lord, no—there's loads of stuff here. They've allowed four slices of bread and butter per man, with an extra twenty slices to allow for gate crashers.

[*He is looking out on to the Green*]

(*Suddenly he laughs*) Do look at the Guv'nor out there, stroking the pitch I believe he knows every blade of grass

THE GIRL D'you live with him down here ?

DICKIE No, I'm up at Cambridge till next June I spend most of my vacs here—and work I don't get time to work much at Cambridge

THE GIRL My brother's at Trinity

[DICKIE looks at the GIRL in astonishment]

DICKIE At Trinity ? I'm at Trinity !

THE GIRL D'you know him ?

DICKIE What's his name ?

THE GIRL Rawlinson

DICKIE What ! Rawly ? He isn't your *brother*—is he ?

THE GIRL (*laughing*) Yes

DICKIE Well, I'm damned Old Rawly—your brother And here we've been staring at each other for two days ! He digs quite near me Do you ever come up ?

THE GIRL I generally manage to run up once or twice a term

DICKIE You know your brother's room in Stanford Street ? I'm just round the corner in Peter Square Look here—come up and lunch with us this morning My mother knows Rawly—she met him last term at the May races—were you up there then ?

THE GIRL Just for the last day !

DICKIE You must have seen me rowing

THE GIRL I must have done

DICKIE Of course, your brother's going to be a doctor, isn't he ? So am I

THE GIRL To take over here when your father retires ?

DICKIE (*laughing*) I don't know The Guv'nor's rather funny about that He'd like to think so—in a way He rather loves the old place, he'd hate to think of a stranger butting in And yet I think he'd like to see me do—something more After all, it's a fine old place to come to now and then, but I don't think I should like to work here always

THE GIRL I think we can work better for knowing there are places like this to come to for a rest

DICKIE That's what I feel I couldn't do my work here—but I shall work better if I know I can come here now and then But do you see how different it is for old people ? The Guv'nor—the Major—and Mr Twigg You see how the village has gradually—sort of—closed round them There's nothing anywhere else in the world, if they lost what they've got here It *must* go on as it is

THE GIRL I felt that too But isn't it rather a losing battle ? I mean—isn't it rather like trying to keep back an encroaching sea ?

DICKIE You can build a dam and turn the sea into other people's land Don't you think Butler would go somewhere else ?

THE GIRL I think his mind's made up

DICKIE Couldn't you go on strike, or something

THE GIRL (*laughing*) I've got to earn my living.

DICKIE Anyway, you will come up to lunch ?

THE GIRL Well, I'm afraid Mr Butler expects—

DICKIE Oh, damn Butler ! He doesn't own you !

THE GIRL I ought to ask him

DICKIE Well, let's catch him before he goes

[There is a pause before they go out on to the Green

You simply can't go this evening—where's Rawly ? Can't I ask him down to stay too ?

THE GIRL I must go back

DICKIE But you must come down again

[They walk out together across the Green

There has been a certain amount of passing to and fro outside, Boys carrying seats, a man with a couple of dixies, etc A small BOY is passing—he looks back and shouts out

'Ere ! Major ses you ain't to climb about on them seats Go on—'op it *(He pauses, puts his tongue out, and—passes out of sight)*

[The marquee is empty It is quiet out on the Green It seems as if everyone has gone to their midday meal A small MAN stealthily looks in through the side opening, satisfies himself that he is unobserved, and comes quietly in It is MR TWIGG Under his arm he carries a long, untidy brown paper parcel He comes to the opposite side of the marquee, and observes a hook in the canvas He stealthily undoes his parcel, and produces a shaped piece of wood from which several long wooden pegs protrude It is a coat-rack He handles it almost lovingly, and hangs it by a cord from the hook He goes to the opening to see that he is quite alone, returns, and takes off his coat, wincing a little as he pulls the sleeve over his bandaged hand Carefully he hangs the coat on a peg The rack tilts, and the coat slips off He stands in some uncertainty for a moment, picks up the coat and tries again, on a

different peg Once more the coat slides off to the ground He tries his hat, but it slips off He stands some while in thought With a sudden impulse he hangs his coat on one hook and his hat on the other, but both slip off to the ground He stares for a moment, with drooping lip and expressionless eyes, at the bright shaft of sun that shines through the opening across the grass Then he takes the coat-rack down, and wraps the brown paper round it He sees a piece of old canvas lying on the ground He takes it up, and covers the coat-rack as if it were something unclean

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE II

SCENE *The Marquee, later in the day*

A remarkable change has taken place from the quietness of the morning The cricket match is in full swing, the excitement is growing intense Mrs WETHERBY and Mrs FORRESTER are relatively unconcerned with the tension on the Green outside, the climax of the cricket match is of secondary importance to the safe packing of the crockery borrowed for the tea The trestle table is littered with empty cups and plates, there is no sign of any food left They are stowing the tea-things into wooden boxes A solitary figure lingers at the table, a red-headed CRICKETER with pads on, and a bat in his hand He is sipping a cup of tea, moistening his lips and starting with fright at every sound from the Green He is acutely conscious of his coming responsibility MR ROGERS is sitting at the small table, scoring Occasionally he turns sideways to sharpen his pencil to a finer point Beside him sits the SCORER who represents the opposing team, a very small man, with a large moustache from

which protrudes a pipe As the scene opens, a cheer spreads round the Green It is not an organised cheer, it is a ragged cheer from people scattered under trees or lounging on seats A MAN in flannels rushes across the opening, apparently pursuing the ball. Two small BOYS jump up in front of MR ROGERS and dance with excitement

MR ROGERS 'Ere ! Sit down, can't you !
'Ow d'you think I can see to score with you in the light !

[The Boys subside

'Oo 'it that ?

BOYS (*in chorus*) The Doctor !

MR ROGERS (*turning to his fellow-scorer*) One to the Doctor !

[They laboriously record the run in their scoring-books As they do so, there comes the woody "chock" of bat against ball—a more excited cheer and shouts of "Run ! Run !" The Boys dance frantically in front of MR ROGERS, who becomes convulsed with fury

MR ROGERS Look 'ere ! I'll send you all 'ome if you don't take care ! Go on ! 'Op it !

[He makes a ferocious movement as if about to rise.

The Boys fade away—there are cries of "Boundary !" "Four !" "

Four, was it ? 'Ow the 'ell can a feller score with them bloomin' boys about ? Four to Mr Dickie (*He puts the runs down and calls to the Boy beside the score-board*) That's 80 Put up 80 !

[The Boy selects a number 8 from the grass and hangs it on the board over a 7. The MAJOR hurries in, extremely red in the face and excited

MAJOR Magnificent ! Splendid ! That's just 80, isn't it, Rogers ?

MR. ROGERS Yes, sir—80

MAJOR Fourteen more and we've beaten the blighters ! We'll teach 'em to brag !

[He crosses to the anxious BATSMAN at the table, bursting with advice]

Don't excite yourself, Morgan You may have to go in—you may not It all depends But, for heaven's sake, don't lose your head ! Play quietly and easily, just as if you were practising !

[MR TWIGG rushes in, tremendously excited]

MR TWIGG Fourteen runs to get and the match to win ! We'll do it ! We must do it ! Mrs Wetherby, aren't you proud of your husband—batting out there—fighting for the village ? And your son—oh, Dickie's a fine boy ! Did you see him hit that one into the Blue Boar ? Right through the tap-room window

[MR ROGERS looks round a little balefully, but quickly turns at the crack of ball against bat and another frantic cheer MR TWIGG jumps as if shot—turns and runs out on to the Green, waving his arms oblivious to his injured hand, shouting “ Oh, good shot, sir ! good shot ! Run ! Run ! Hurrah ! ”]

MR ROGERS *(acknowledging the UMPIRE's signal with a dignified wave of his pencil)* Boundary ! Four Four to Mr Dickie

[The heads of the SCORERS bend over their books as they record the runs.]

MAJOR Ten to get—my God ! Ten to get ! *(He turns to the LADIES)* You must come and watch—never mind those dirty cups—come along, Joan !

MRS W Arthur will be tired to-morrow ! Out there in that awful sun !

MAJOR Aren't you proud of him ? Look at him now standing out there batting like a hero Fine old chap ! *He doesn't lose his head in a crisis like the youngsters ! Give me the old dog for the rough road (He suddenly breaks off as another shout comes from the Green) Splendid ! Four byes—only six more now*

[They hurry out together

The red-headed BATSMAN is left alone—a picture of misery—hardly daring to watch or listen Suddenly there is a cry of “How's that ?” followed by a sonorous “Out” from the UMPIRE A groan of consternation drifts in from the Green The BATSMAN at the table starts violently, and drops his cup of tea The MAJOR returns—slowly and quietly—his face suddenly drawn with anxiety He speaks hoarsely

MAJOR Dickie's out ! *(He looks at the waiting BATSMAN)* Mr Dickie's out, Morgan ! Six more runs to get and only you and Mr Butler to bat ! For heaven's sake play carefully—don't lose your head !

[Mr TWIGG rushes in

MR TWIGG Dickie's out ! •

MAJOR *(irritably)* I know he's out

MR TWIGG *(imploringly to the waiting BATSMAN, who is now doggedly rolling up his sleeves)* Oh, Morgan ! It's up to you now ! Keep cool—and calculated

MAJOR Keep your legs well out of the wicket !

[There is some vigorous clapping from the Green DICKIE is seen returning from his innings , he takes off his cap and smilingly acknowledges the applause. MR ROGERS looks up at the small BOY who is waiting enquiringly to put the score on the board

MR ROGERS Last man 28 88 for 8. Last man 28

[The BOY searches for the correct numbers to put on the board, and turns anxiously to MR ROGERS]

BOY We ain't got enough 8's

MR. ROGERS Go on—we've got six blooming 8's Use yer eyes

[The BOY eventually finds one]

DICKIE comes in, wiping his brow, the MAJOR runs to him and pats him on the back

MAJOR Well played, Dickie ! Jolly fine—oh ! If only you hadn't got out !

[He turns and runs over to the BATSMAN]

Don't be tempted to swipe Play quietly !

DICKIE *(looking up from removing his pads)* Keep an eye on that fat man, bowling in the green waistcoat—he makes them spin

MAJOR You'd better wear a cap—the sun's getting troublesome

MR TWIGG *(feeling the bat)* Isn't this bat too heavy ? Why not—

MAJOR *(breaking in)* Don't worry him, Twigg—leave him alone ! *(He turns to the BATSMAN)* Don't for heaven's sake try any short runs—the Doctor's very tired

[The BATSMAN has rolled his sleeves almost to his shoulders Without a word he spits on his hands and goes out as if to execution]

DICKIE Good luck, Morgan !

MR. TWIGG Good luck—and God bless you !

MAJOR Only hit the crooked ones !

[Applause greets the BATSMAN as he appears on the Green There are shouts of “Hooray !” “Good old Ginger !” “Good luck, Ginger !”]

and a little excited laughter The MAJOR looks round anxiously

Where's Butler ? He'd better get ready to go in !

[The GIRL comes in with DICKIE's scarf and blazer She goes to DICKIE]

GIRL Well played ! D'you want these ?

DICKIE (*rising*) Thanks awfully !

MAJOR Have you seen Mr Butler ? It's time he got his pads on

GIRL I saw him outside just now

MAJOR Well, he may be wanted any moment—let's find him at once

[He goes towards the Green as a MAN in a non-descript chauffeur's uniform appears at the side opening]

MAN Is Mr Butler 'ere, sir ? Car waiting to take 'im into Winchester

MAJOR What ? (*The significance of the CHAUFFEUR's remark gradually sinks in*) No—he's—he's not here ! He's busy ! He—he can't come !

MAN I was told to pick 'im up for certain at 'arf-past five, sir

MAJOR I don't care ! Go away ! Can't you see there's a cricket match on ?

[MR BUTLER hurries in from the Green, anxiously looking at his watch He glances up and sees the waiting CHAUFFEUR]

MR BUTLER Ah ! There you are ! (*He turns to the MAJOR*) What a pity it is !

MAJOR (*aghast*) But—but good heavens ! You're not *going* ?

MR BUTLER It's half-past five

MR TWIGG Oh—but, Mr Butler ! Six runs to get—and the match to win ! You—you *can't* go !

MR BUTLER I'm awfully sorry, but I did definitely say half-past five, didn't I ? Business *must* come before games

MAJOR Yes, but not in a crisis like this Don't you realise—we haven't beaten these blighters for four years, and now all we want are six runs

MR BUTLER You'll get those without my help

MAJOR How do we know ? Morgan's very uncertain—he may be out first ball

MR TWIGG (*looking through the opening*) Look out ! Morgan's taking his first ball ! I hope to goodness he keeps his head

[*They creep stealthily to the opening and gaze out on to the Green MR BUTLER, despite himself, is drawn with them—the CHAUFFEUR sidles over and watches too*]

MAJOR Look ! He's going to swipe ! Oh, the fool—— !

[*His words fade away There comes the crisp "chock" of bat and ball, followed by an almost frenzied scream of delight which suddenly dies into something of a groan*]

MR TWIGG (*excitedly pointing into the sky*) Look ! Look where it's gone ! Right up there !

MAJOR The fool ! The idiot ! I told him not to hit blindly like that Look ! there's a fielder there—he'll catch it—he'll catch it—oh—Morgan—you fool——

[*A FIELDER has crept into view, gazing intently into the sky, his hands stretched up with open palms.*]

MR TWIGG Look at the height it's gone ! Oh,

look, it's stopped going up ! It's coming down !
He'll catch it—oh, I can't bear it !

[MR TWIGG turns into the marquee and covers his face with his hands, moaning slightly The others watch, fascinated, petrified—the ball comes hurtling down into the FIELDER's hands—and bounces out—there is a shriek of delight and laughter, cheers, and one or two catcalls The small BOYS suddenly re-appear, and dance in front of MR ROGERS, shutting out his view MR ROGERS rises in a fury and cuffs the BOYS out of sight The laughter and cheers continue—someone shouts out “ Butter-fingers ! ”

MAJOR Look—it's going over the boundary !

MR BUTLER (*excitedly*) He'll just catch it in time !

MAJOR No, he won't !

MAN He's got it !

MAJOR It's over ! Hurrah ! Four—four (*He turns to the scorers*) Put down 4 to Morgan ! Oh—but that was a wild, dangerous hit (*He turns to MR BUTLER*) Two more and we've won—two more !

[MR. TWIGG has furtively uncovered his face He turns round.

MR TWIGG Did he catch it ?

[No one replies Apparently another ball is about to be bowled, everyone's eyes are riveted on the Green

MAJOR Look—he's taking another ball ! Heavens ! He's going to swipe again ! Oh—the fool——

[There is a click of bails—a groan from the Green

(*Hoarsely*) He's out ! Morgan's out !

[DICKIE hurries in from the Green

DICKIE · Is Mr Butler here ? (*He sees MR. BUTLER*) Thank goodness ! I had an awful feeling you might have gone It's frightfully decent of you to stay, sir—we all realise what you're doing for us

MAN It's twenty to, sir—we'll never do Winchester in less than a quarter of an hour

MAJOR Oh, for God's sake, go away ! Go away and puncture yourself ! Mr Butler isn't going

MR BUTLER But, Major—I can't——

MAJOR I know you can't !

MR BUTLER I mean I can't stay

[*MR TWIGG seizes a pair of pads and throws one to DICKIE*

MR TWIGG Quick ! Put his pads on !

[*DICKIE and MR TWIGG kneel down in front of MR BUTLER and feverishly strap the pads on his legs MR BUTLER stands in helpless indecision The MAJOR addresses him*

MAJOR Can you stand there, Mr Butler, with English blood in your veins, and desert a cricket team—with two runs to win ?

[*MR BUTLER turns to the CHAUFFEUR*

MR BUTLER You'll have to wait

[*The CHAUFFEUR touches his cap and disappears to watch the cricket*

MAJOR You won't regret this, Mr Butler As captain of the team I shall propose you as a Vice-President at the next meeting

MR BUTLER That's very good of you, Major

[*MR TWIGG and DICKIE complete the strapping on of MR BUTLER's pads, while feverish activity passes outside*

MR. ROGERS *has instructed the BOY to put up the score "92 for 9 Last man 4" The red-headed BATSMAN has returned in dejected silence to the tent, with one or two half-hearted hand-claps and "'Ard luck, Ginger" from a tolerant friend outside*

There are anxious enquiries of "Ninety-two, isn't it?"—"Two more to win?"—"Oh, my!" etc

MAJOR The whole village looks to you now,
Mr Butler I'm certain you'll do it

MR BUTLER I'll do my best I'm afraid I'm not
much of a batsman

[The MAJOR thrusts a bat into his hands, MR BUTLER turns and grimly steps towards the Green DICKIE, the MAJOR, and MR TWIGG stand back a pace—and clap their hands The applause is taken up vigorously as MR BUTLER appears outside

MAJOR We can't be in suspense much longer
now! In a moment we shall know the worst

MR TWIGG The best!

MAJOR Let's hope it'll be the best

MR TWIGG Look! Mr Butler's gone over to
the Doctor!

MAJOR They're shaking hands! Splendid!

DICKIE They've changed over! They've put
that fast bowler on again

MAJOR It's a scandal to let that fellow bowl on
this bumpy ground—it's murder My elbow's
aching like blazes—not sure if it hasn't cracked
the bone

MR TWIGG The Doctor's got to face it!
Butler's this end Look out! Here comes the
bowler—doesn't he make awful faces!

[There is a moment of silence, the crack of bat and ball—and a cheer

MAJOR Good old Doctor ! Right in the centre of the bat !

MR TWIGG Look at that fielder ! It's gone between his legs ! Run ! Run !

MAJOR Oh, magnificent ! We've tied ! One more to win ! One more !

DICKIE It's Butler's turn now

MR TWIGG Oh, Butler—do—do make a run !

MAJOR Here comes the bowler ! What a great hulking brute he is !

[There is a moment of deep stillness round the Green, then a crack, and a groan of pain]

MAJOR Heavens ! It's got Butler on the knuckles !

DICKIE He's dropped his bat !

MR TWIGG He's doubling up !

MAJOR God ! It must have hurt him !

[The first groan of consternation on the Green has turned to a shout of excitement—a roar of applause]

MR TWIGG Look ! Look ! ! The ball's gone through the slips ! It's gone to the boundary ! ! Four ! We've got it !

MAJOR We've won !

[All words are drowned in the hubbub from the Green, people are running towards the pitch]

By gad ! What a fine game the Doctor's played ! Let's go and chair the old boy ; he deserves it !

[The MAJOR runs out among the crowd, followed by DICKIE and MR TWIGG]

ROGERS totally disregards the small BOYS jumping about in front of him, turns in triumph to the SCORER of the opposing team, and slaps him on the back so vigorously that the pipe shoots out of his mouth

MR ROGERS Got you this time, Gilbert !

[He jumps up and follows the crowd His small companion picks up his pipe and, relighting it, strolls out with a look of pitying contempt for such foolish excitement]

The confused turmoil goes on outside MR BUTLER appears, sucking his knuckles and shaking them, he is followed by the MAJOR and some of the team, who are slapping him on the back and congratulating him.

MAJOR Damn good show ! Made the winning hit with your knuckles ! Never mind, old boy, it was worth it !

[Confused cheers and excited laughter come from the opposite direction—the MAJOR looks and shouts with laughter]

Here comes the Doctor ! Bravo !

[The DOCTOR appears, chaired on the shoulders of two sturdy CRICKETERS and surrounded by a little cheering crowd The MAJOR runs and helps to lower the DOCTOR to the ground The DOCTOR crosses quickly to MR BUTLER, takes his hand, and gently examines his injured knuckles]

DOCTOR I'm so sorry, Mr Butler, it must have hurt you abominably ! Why on earth didn't they give you any gloves ?

MR. BUTLER That's all right, Doctor

DOCTOR You must let me paint them with iodine. I can't tell you how grateful we are. Isn't it fine—to win ?

MR BUTLER It's been a great afternoon.

DOCTOR You bowled splendidly ! You really must play again—*(he looks up and smiles)*—and bat with gloves next time !

[There is a pause The DOCTOR is gently massaging MR BUTLER's injured hand]

You *do* understand, don't you, what a pity it would be—if anything happened down here—to spoil all this ?

MR BUTLER That's all right, Doctor

[*The DOCTOR looks eagerly up at MR BUTLER*

DOCTOR You mean that ?

[*MR BUTLER nods and smiles The DOCTOR has been massaging his injured knuckles He gently presses his hand*

MR BUTLER I shan't disturb you I can build somewhere else

DOCTOR I'm very glad

[*The MAJOR has been fussing impatiently round He comes up to MR BUTLER and slaps him on the shoulder*

MAJOR Come along, Butler We'll soon put you right at the Blue Boar !

MR BUTLER May I stand the drinks ?

MAJOR By Jove, you're a sportman !

[*There are some calls for "Speech" outside The MAJOR goes to the entrance and addresses the crowd*

Boys ! The Doctor's played the game of his life to-day ! He's won the match with his pluck ! I can't say any more, but three cheers for the President !

[*Three ragged cheers burst out The DOCTOR acknowledges them with a little wave of his hand*

The MAJOR adds

And now Mr Butler wants to stand drinks all round !

[*MR BUTLER is carried out on the crest of further cheers*

The MAJOR turns, laughing, to the DOCTOR, who has sank down upon a little wooden bench The MAJOR crosses to him and begins to unstrap his pads

MAJOR What a great day it's been ! (*He sighs*)
If only it wasn't for this damned Butler business

DOCTOR (*smiling*) You needn't worry about that, Major——

MAJOR Why, how d'you mean ?

DOCTOR I've settled that Mr Butler's not going to disturb us here—he's going to build somewhere else

MAJOR You don't mean it !

[*The DOCTOR nods and smiles*

By Gad, that's fine ! How did you do it ?

DOCTOR (*smiles artfully*) Ah !

MAJOR Come along, let's go down to the Blue Boar and celebrate !

DOCTOR I think I'll rest here for a little while
—you go on——

MAJOR No I'll stay with you !

DOCTOR No You must It's your duty to go

MAJOR You deserve a rest, old boy. We've done big things to-day

[*The MAJOR goes away The crowd has disappeared, their voices are growing faint across the Green*

The small SCORING-BOY comes in with the pile of numbers He puts them on the table and turns, surprised to see the DOCTOR sitting there alone.

THE BOY I've put all the numbers together, sir
I'm sorry about that one I left behind last week.

DOCTOR That's all right, George

[The Boy lingers at the door for a moment

THE BOY We got 'em beat this time, sir !

DOCTOR Yes, we managed it this time

[There is another little pause

THE BOY Good night, sir

DOCTOR Good night, George

[The Boy goes away The Doctor is alone It is very quiet now , the sun is beginning to throw long shadows across the Green

THE PLAY ENDS